

BLUE BOOK

Magazine

July

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GODS GUARD *the* BRAVE • RED TERROR
The MAN WHO WAS 63,000 YEARS OLD
THERE'S MURDER *in the* AIR by Roy Chanslor.
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Good Medicine

A MERRY heart doeth good like a medicine; but
a broken spirit drieth the bones."

It was this good medicine, in large part, that sustained our forefathers through the terrific privation of pioneer life; they had to grin, or they could not have borne it; and thus was born the traditional and typical American humor—out of Hardship, by Courage.

This same good medicine likewise supplied the iron tonic that has helped the American pilgrim throughout his progress—through Valley Forge and Shiloh and the Argonne; through drought, flood, earthquake and pestilence; through repeated cycles of business depression. "The cynic devil in his blood," Kipling called it. And it is this same cynic devil, probably, who constantly reminds us that happiness is first, a state of mind; second, a condition of the body—and to only a very small extent dependent on worldly success or material possessions. Happy rich men are rare.

Editorially we think very highly of this cynic devil—though we doubt his complete cynicism; and we believe most sincerely in the good medicine of a merry heart. So it is that we strive to offer you each month the best humor obtainable—stories like M. Bowman Howell's "A Thief in Hand," Arthur Akers' "Jailhouse Jeopardy" or Ben Newcomer's "Big Jim vs. Paul Bunyan," in this issue.

And next month we plan to give you opportunity for merriment in a large way with Talbert Josselyn's joyous novel "Smuggler's Cove." A novel of swift adventure and dark mystery, this: but more important and far more rare, there is a quality of champagne exhilaration about this story that makes it a treasure indeed. Expect a real treat in this and the many other good things in the next (the August) issue.

—The Editor.

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JOSSELYN

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BLUE BOOK



JULY, 1933

MAGAZINE

VOL. 57, NO. 3

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Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine

DONALD KENNICOTT, *Editor*

Published monthly, at McCall St., Dayton, Ohio. Subscription Offices—Dayton, Ohio. Editorial and Executive Offices—230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. The BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE—July, 1933, Vol. LVII, No. 3. Copyright, 1933, by The McCall Company, in the United States and Great Britain. Entered as second-class matter, November 12, 1930, at the Post Office at Dayton, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Subscription Price, \$1.50 per year. Canadian postage 50c; foreign postage \$1.00. For change of address, give us four weeks notice and send old address as well as new. Special Note: Each issue of The Blue Book Magazine is copyrighted. Any republication of the matter appearing in the magazine, either wholly or in part, is not permitted except by special authorization. Special Notice to Writers and Artists: Manuscripts and art material submitted for publication in The Blue Book Magazine will be received only on the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury thereto while such manuscripts or art material are in the publisher's possession or in transit.

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The Man

By JAY LUCAS

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

his cigarette. After a moment, he spoke again:

"Beastly inconvenient not to know one's age, within several thousand years. When I vote, or anything of that sort, I give it as thirty-five. Avoids embarrassing moments, you know. Really couldn't tell 'em the facts!"

I pretended to yawn in his face. Trying to look bored, I took a sip of my whisky and soda, and then turned to gaze absently at the towering range of mountains to our east. Far up, the last rays of the sun made a little pin-point of



Alfred thought I was insane; he wouldn't believe me until he had looked for himself. It was the Golden-haired Girl!

"QUEER? Deuced queer, in fact! I was born, you know, about sixty-three thousand years ago. That figure, of course, is not at all definite—just an average of the opinions of the professors. Might have been a hundred thousand."

Dick Saunders stretched his long legs far out from his chair, and stared broodingly first at me and then at the tip of

light on some jutting angle of the Greaves Glacier.

"I wonder," I murmured, "how the trout will rise tomorrow? If some rotter just doesn't come along with a wet fly and set them down—"

Dick favored me with a distant stare—but I had learned by this time that that particular type of stare meant high approval. Dick might forgive a mur-

Who Was 63,000 Years Old

A fascinating and most unusual story by the gifted author of "Vanishing Herds" and "Apache."

derer, but never an angler who did not fish strictly according to the accepted "purist" style of the English chalk streams. It made not the slightest difference that this style was totally unsuited to the swift, glacier-fed rivers of British Columbia. Then he drawled:

"My true name, you know, is Lom-Ssik; of course our language was monosyllabic."

"I wonder," I yawned, "when Doctor Alfred will be back? Had his double-barrel, didn't he?"

Dick fixed his blue eyes on me, and into them came a grim, British determination that reminded me of Balaclava, the Siege of Lucknow, and such things. I had long given up all hope of hearing his story at first hand—and now here he was, impaling me on an *Ancient Mariner* stare, firmly decided that I had to listen. That is, of course, unless I showed the faintest sign of interest, when he'd dry up, on the spot.

There was a brief pause, and his eyes wandered up toward the mountains. Then he launched into the story.

VERY queer! Those professors—most of them seem grieved that I was born at all. Seem to think it beastly inconsiderate of me, to put it mildly. Little Von Kuhn still seems to hope that it's a cruel joke of some sort. There *shouldn't* have been tall, fair-haired men in western Canada sixty-three thousand years ago—too upsetting to the accepted order of things!

Of course we probably weren't here long; my tribe was at the extreme tip of the line of Nordics which must have stretched all the way from Europe, always at the northern edge of the forests, never far from the ice-cap. I know there were no Nordics to the east; just Eskimos, who then lived in the forest, before the Indians came from the south and pushed them into such a beastly chilly climate. They never were fighters, those Eskimos, but when a dozen or so of

them managed to capture one of our men— Ugh! Quite unpleasant!

We weren't the jolly savages most people seem to think cavemen were. Once I did see a man beat his wife, but the rest of us were very cool to him after that. Fact is, she deserved it—but why dig up a scandal buried sixty-three thousand years?

WE lived in caves, naturally, but were quite as comfortable as the average European peasant today. Rather more so, if anything. And we had much more to eat—game, you know, and nuts and berries and things. Of course no one had bothered to invent agriculture, when there was more than enough natural food for such a thin population. One would have been a jolly ass to farm, when he could find plenty to eat without all that bother.

We had no word for work; hunting and fishing could never be work to a Nordic, if you know what I mean. Isn't now, for that matter. Look at Alfred, for instance—not dragging you into it, old chap. I always insist that Alfred is a greater savage than I!

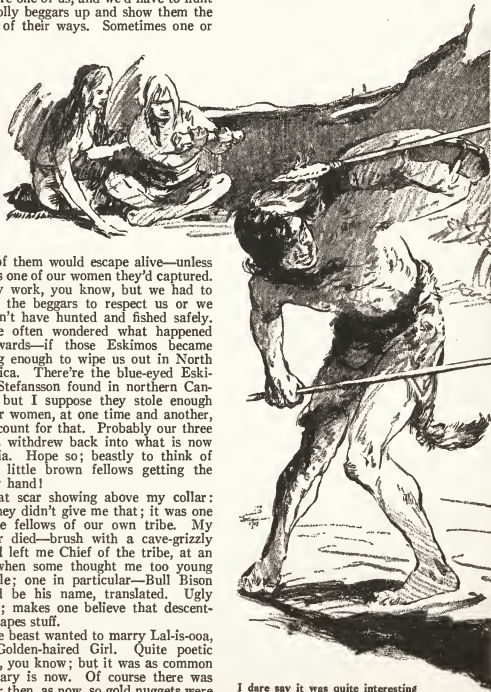
As I said, our tribe was the extreme tip of the Nordic line; there were, I think, only two other tribes in North America, between us and Bering Strait. It wasn't a strait then; but I'm not sure, from what the bards said, whether it was land or ice. The bards were great travelers—always on the go from tribe to tribe. Of course they were protected by what we called "The Law of the Two Men": one man, or two, coming to a strange tribe without invitation were regarded as visitors and treated hospitably; three or more were taken as a war-party and might find things rather hot. Theoretically, of course; they could always yell and throw down their spears, if there weren't too many of them, and then the argument would begin, usually to end with their being invited in for a big dinner of mammoth-steak and baked

acorns. That is, if they were tactful; otherwise they'd be sent home with a severe lecture for disturbing the peace of the tribes.

That was among the light-haired men, you understand. Those little black-haired Eskimos generally kept well out of our sight, in the very darkest of the forest. Of course every so often they'd capture one of us, and we'd have to hunt the jolly beggars up and show them the error of their ways. Sometimes one or

course, as good obsidian for spear-heads. But to think of that beast's wanting to marry her!

In the first place, she was the daughter of a bard, which made her fully the equal of a chief. Bull Bison was only a Follower. Pretty hard to explain without going into details, but the tribes were divided into Leaders and Follow-



two of them would escape alive—unless it was one of our women they'd captured. Nasty work, you know, but we had to teach the beggars to respect us or we couldn't have hunted and fished safely.

I've often wondered what happened afterwards—if those Eskimos became strong enough to wipe us out in North America. There're the blue-eyed Eskimos Stefansson found in northern Canada; but I suppose they stole enough of our women, at one time and another, to account for that. Probably our three tribes withdrew back into what is now Siberia. Hope so; beastly to think of those little brown fellows getting the upper hand!

That scar showing above my collar: no, they didn't give me that; it was one of the fellows of our own tribe. My father died—brush with a cave-grizzly—and left me Chief of the tribe, at an age when some thought me too young to rule; one in particular—Bull Bison would be his name, translated. Ugly brute; makes one believe that descent-from-apes stuff.

The beast wanted to marry Lal-is-ooa, the Golden-haired Girl. Quite poetic name, you know; but it was as common as Mary is now. Of course there was placer then, as now, so gold nuggets were fairly common ornaments. We knew the stuff well; not nearly so valuable, of

I dare say it was quite interesting to the spectators, but I hardly knew what was doing after Bull Bison had nicked my head with his spear.

ers; the Leaders with certain rights in the hunt, and things like that. Not exactly nobility, but perhaps the thing from which nobility originated. The Leaders got their name from their being



given the first line in battle, and that sort of thing. Expected to die more gamely, and—well, it's a bit difficult to explain. Of course we never were exclusive; a Follower who showed ability and all that sort would be elected to us. His sons for two generations automatically became subject to vote of our council; after that his descendants were just as much Leaders as we, without further ado. And of course the Black Vote could kick any of us down if we broke the codes; but that was really equivalent to a death-sentence—a chap with any remnants of pride would pick up his spear and disappear in the forest forever. All very democratic, really; nothing exclusive.

EVER since I'd been a child, Bull Bison had hated me. I never knew why. And then, later, of course there was the Golden-haired Girl. Very charming girl. She and I had an understanding that if I succeeded in consolidating my position as Chief— There were no formal engagements in those days, you know. We—well, to put it bluntly, I suppose we were in love. Rather idiotically so.

At any rate, I certainly didn't intend to see her married to Bull Bison, and the Golden-haired Girl had her own opinions on the subject too—strong opinions; you must remember that she was the daughter of a bardic family, and not just a common girl. Distant cousin of my own, in fact. We had some tosh about tracing our descent to an ancient war-god; of course we both believed it.

Bull Bison knew he hadn't the ghost of a show so long as I was Chief. He did the logical thing; I shouldn't have given the beggar credit for so much intelligence—tried to stir the tribe up against me, to get me deposed. There was no precedent for the thing, but if he'd succeeded I suppose I'd have had to pick up my spear and go to the forest—only self-respecting way.

Why, he even tried to get the story going that I'd thrown wood on a fire from the east side! That wasn't allowed—the sun rose in the east, so one had to build a fire facing the east. You know how many ridiculous taboos there are among all primitive peoples—why, one almost had to sneeze according to the rules. As a Leader, I was of course a great stickler for those taboos; born in me to be. Perhaps that is why now—Well, you know I couldn't think of shooting at a sitting bird, or using one of

those beastly repeater shotguns; couldn't be that sort of rotter. And in fishing—Well, you know, old chap—Supremely idiotic, of course, but—

At any rate, I was fishing for trout one day. I blush to admit it, but my hook was baited with a big white grub.

said that even some of the Leaders avoided quarreling with him. But of course there was only one thing for it, then; that night I had a friend invite Bull Bison to meet me next evening in the middle of the village. Sent Bu-asp-ek—very tactful chap.

Spears, of course. He was far older and more experienced than I; but then those big, heavy-muscled fellows are always slow, so really I had all the ad-



I knew from the first that it was only a matter of time until they brought me to bay, but I streaked it the best I could.

But of course if one had tried to use a dry-fly then—You understand, old chap.

I hooked a trout—a splendid trout. In playing him with my hand-line, he managed to get tangled around Bull Bison's line. The fellow was using a far heavier line than mine, so he hauled the fish to the bank. Of course I demanded it, but he had the audacity to claim that it had taken *his* hook, and that I was lying. He'd quite a reputation as a spearsman, you know; it was

vantage. Sounds primitive, of course, but it's not so long since your own people forbade duels. Still done in Germany, and one can scarcely call the Germans savages; really remarkable people; take little Von Kuhn, for instance.

We had a rather curious custom: there were two flat stones in the ground, side by side in the middle of the village. Each about two feet square, I should say, and close to each other. In things of this sort, one man was supposed to stand on each stone until—well, as long as he could. No circling, and no backing off. Fighting anywhere else than on the Battle Stones was strictly taboo—a sort of rowdyism. Of course that made sure

no one in the village would miss the run; perhaps that was why it originated, though more likely it was to prevent hot-headed quarrels over things that could be patched up.

Bull Bison was there first, and seized the west stone. That, of course, forced me to fight with the sun in my eyes. I'd thought of getting there ahead of him, but I'd have felt like a perfect idiot standing on that stone all by myself, with no one to fight.

I dare say it was quite an interesting little affair to the spectators who crowded 'round, but I hardly knew what was doing after he'd nicked my head with his stone spear. Very clever of him. The blood—well, you understand, I couldn't see so well after that. I held my feet close together and dared not move them, afraid I'd get off the stone.

BUT of course I had all the advantage, really. At that, I must have been a bit messy after it was all over. Seemed feverish, you know—dazed, or something that way. Didn't really get a clear head until dawn next morning, when I found Lal-is-ooa bending over me in my cave, nursing me. Frightful shock; according to our laws, being alone with me at night would make her my wife, without further ado. Of course if we were already married, we could not go through the usual ceremony, with feasting, and flowers, and all that. And I the Chief, and she the daughter of a bard! Of course it was not that I cared a hang, for my part, but I knew how embarrassing it would be for her—the other women of the tribe would take care to keep slyly reminding her of it. Common-law marriage; quite all right for Followers, but—

I should have had more confidence in Lal-is-ooa's excellent judgment. I suppose I must have looked thunderstruck, for she beckoned, and her elder sister El-ss came from the back of the cave. El-ss had been there all night; hadn't left her alone with me a second. When they first carried me home, El-ss couldn't be found, but Lal-is-ooa had five men stand in the cave until she came—which was quite as satisfactory, according to our customs. The theory, of course, being that it took five men to spread as much scandal as one woman. Rather amusing, when one looks back at it.

It was almost a month before I was able to walk again. Now you see why I appear so modest in picking a bathing-suit—I look rather chopped-up, though

of course they were only scratches. Excellent nurse, the Golden-haired Girl; wouldn't let El-ss touch me. And very sensible.

We talked things over coolly, and decided to have the wedding-feast as soon as possible. Just as well; no one else would trouble me, with Bull Bison out of it. Her father chanced to come back from one of his expeditions, and approved of our plans. Great old chap, Bu-ga-tck; reminds one of those English majors who are always shooting lions and things. Must have got as far as Finland on that expedition.

We had a custom that may sound odd to you. A young man couldn't get married until he had killed a cave-grizzly and brought back the paws and head; even a Follower had to do that. Jolly good idea, though—kept all sorts of people from leaving descendants. Primitive eugenics, you know.

Of course I shouldn't have gone hunting until I was stronger. Should have known I'd never come back. Not so bad for me—the thing was over quickly—but then think of poor Lal-is-ooa waiting for me. Always looking toward the mountains, hoping to see me come trotting down with the head held before me and the paws hung around my neck—that was how we did it—and chanting the Bear Song. Really, old chap, it gives one a queer feeling even now to think of her waiting, waiting, and trying to persuade herself that some little sound coming from toward the mountains was the Bear Song—you know how women are. Silly of me to go until I had become stronger.

Eskimos. Never heard of them in the mountains before. Must have been fifty of the beggars. At first they strung out after me, trying to run me down. Very poor judgment; I'd whirl around and pot the leader before the rest could catch up. Potted five of them before they learned better. Then they kept together and settled down for a long run, tracking where they couldn't run by sight. Very much like a fox-hunt.

OF course if I hadn't been weak, I could have wiped the beggars' eyes easily at running across the mountains. We were much better runners—longer legs, deeper chests. As it was, I knew from the first that it was only a matter of time until they brought me to bay, but I streaked it the best I could. Straight to the Trap Glacier; I wasn't wanting

them to capture me alive and play any of their jolly little tricks on me.

Beat them by a nose. I just had time to turn and pot the leader with my spear; and then I jumped. There was a crack running down the glacier from its head—crevasse, you know. Sloped toward it from both sides; earthquake, probably. Once one got on that slope of ice, he—well, those little brown fellows certainly weren't going to try to climb down to get the remains for a plaything.

Amusing, really, to think of how I'd tricked them out of their fun. I can imagine them standing there, gibbering in their absurd language.

Although it was quite late in summer, the snow hadn't all melted off the ice. You know what happens when one rolls a snowball downhill. I was the snowball, so to speak; the nucleus of a quite respectable little avalanche. The snow seemed to burst and scatter when we struck the far wall of the crevasse, and I went tumbling down ahead of it, being heavier. Must have been another slide just before, from the other side, for it was somewhat like falling on a great pile of feather-beds—or rather, feathers without the beds, for I kept on going down after I struck the surface. And then all that snow which had come with me would be piling on top.

Of course I was completely exhausted from running, so I suppose I didn't struggle very much; useless, anyway. Didn't think much about myself; thinking of poor Lal-is-ooa who would be waiting, waiting, to hear the first faint sound of the Bear Song coming from the mountains. She was the kind of girl who *would* wait. Wonderful girl!

CURIOS, you know, about that chap in Switzerland waking those fellows up after they'd been frozen for two days. But I hear there wasn't a word about it, only in the medical journals. Then, of course, everyone has become accustomed to saving men who had been drowned, or struck by lightning, or something of the sort. Adrenalin; just shoot it directly into the heart with a long needle. Deuced powerful stuff—get the old heart pumping again after it had stopped. All Strassmann did was to combine it with the respirator—that thing they use when the lung-muscles have been paralyzed. And those chaps in the Alps; Alfred insists they'd have saved the third one, but that he had

organic heart weakness—couldn't stand the strain of starting up again.

Of course Alfred says that when he first saw me through the ice, at the foot of the glacier, all he thought of was a way to get me into perpetual cold storage—sort of sample, you know, for the Museum. Too bad about those mammoths they find so often in Siberia; always exposed and partly rotten, with the wolves eating them. If they could just find one before he breaks through the ice—I'd give a good deal to see a real live mammoth again, not just a stuffed one with part of it missing. Old De Frémiet is talking of building a giant respirator to hold one; must get the whole body in, so that the antiseptics keep germs from taking hold. Can't have germs until one thaws out.

AT any rate, Alfred concluded a man frozen a few thousand years was in just the same condition as one frozen an hour; if one is frozen, he's frozen, so no changes can take place. Everything there, you know—just a matter of getting it started again. Still, an older man wouldn't have thought of trying it. But Alfred has a rather wild imagination; he should have been one of those writer-chaps instead of a medico.

He had to rush to the village and sell his car to raise the wind. Wired for adrenalin, and respirators, and things—had them all come by airplane. Can't see why he thought a day or two more or less would make any difference, after all those thousands of years. Rather excitable, Alfred, although of course he's getting better as he gets older. And he really didn't have the slightest hope of succeeding.

Wired those chaps from whom he got the things that they were for a frozen man—Strassmann treatment. Didn't say how long he'd been frozen. Told no one until he saw some color coming back, or something of that sort. Three days and nights, he said. Then got a crowd of specialists in by airplanes.

Frightful shock when I woke up; thought surely the Eskimos had me after all! Of course I had been out of the respirator several days. It chanced that Kennedy and another doctor—Ballintyne, of Ottawa—were the only ones in the room, and both were dark, with blackish hair. I'd never heard of anyone but an Eskimo having black hair. Pretended to be asleep until their backs were turned, and then slipped quietly



Must have looked like a bally ass, standing there with a lancet! Comical, though, how they tore out of the room.

out of bed. I'd already spotted a long lancet on a table near me.

Must have looked like a bally ass, standing there in the raw, backed against the wall. Lucky thing they didn't start toward me. Comical, though, how they got out of the room—tore one hinge off the door! Thought they'd seen a ghost.

And then Alfred came rushing in; the chap was white as paper. When I saw his yellow hair, I didn't quite know what to do. Spoke to him, of course, expecting him to understand me; thought he was a member of another tribe. His dress struck me as extremely queer, but I knew there were different customs in different tribes. And he had a stiff three-days' beard, which I couldn't understand; we plucked our beards with mammoth-ivory tweezers, so they became weak and—er—discouraged.

Somehow he got the lancet away from me; of course there was the Law of the Two Men, and he very obviously wasn't Eskimo. Was weak anyway; just ready to fall. Got me back in bed, and fussed over me just as Lal-is-ooa had a few days before. No, by Jove!—it was perhaps a hundred thousand years before. Queer! She could have waited until her hair was—

Of course Alfred had regarded me as a specimen until then—sort of curio he owned, having found it. But even then, before I spoke a word of his language, I saw what a capital chap he was. He

—but you know Alfred. And he—er—seemed to realize all at once that I was a human being. I placed him immediately as a Leader.

Deuce of a fuss in the papers. Reporters. Very embarrassing. But trust Alfred to know what to do under any circumstances; he dressed me in some of his own clothes, had my hair cut, and made signs to me to act as much like him as possible. He was somewhat hesitant about giving me cigarettes at first, but when he saw I'd really made up my mind to the thing—

At any rate, the reporters looked thoroughly disgusted; wish you'd seen their faces, old chap, when they'd find me eating dinner with Alfred; he always insisted on full dress—thinks a dinner-jacket abominable. Within a week I had better table manners than the beggars were accustomed to, and I'd caught on to Alfred's trick of blowing a little puff of smoke in the air and staring icily at them. One fellow just took one look at me and turned on his heel, using language I fortunately couldn't understand at the time. Thought it all a hoax—a rotten joke.

Of course it was different with the professors. They gathered like flies; they knew that some of the ancient races had greater average brain-capacity than modern man, with more advanced development in the seats of higher thought—abstruse reasoning, and all that sort of

thing. Some of those Cro-Magnon chaps must have been marvelously intelligent. Of course my people were not like that; really little better than the moderns, although the more stupid ones of today could not have survived under our conditions.

They guarded me as though I were so much radium—wouldn't let me out of the house. A fortnight of this, and naturally I didn't look or feel too chirky; always used to the open air. Alfred solved that too—sneaked me out a back door one morning, gave me a shotgun, and off we went for a tramp in the hills.

Of course there was a great to-do over that, and they immediately chartered a special train to take me to Ottawa, where they thought I'd be safer. Positively indecent how they poked and measured me. Had me talking, making records, until I was hoarse, and photographed me almost inch by inch. Had to exercise in an indoor gymnasium. At first they tried having me walk with guards on the streets, but it drew too great a crowd. Alfred wanted to show me the sights from a closed motor, but they were afraid of traffic accidents.

Well, you can quite understand what six months of that did to me; you know how fast an Indian goes if he lives in the city. Lassiter diagnosed tuberculosis, but no one would agree with him—rot, of course; a specialist always will find what he specializes in. Just needed some fresh air, and a little peace, day or night.

I HAD learned quite a little English by that time, but of course I hadn't become sufficiently familiar with the customs to know what to do. Again old Alfred saved the day—came marching in with two chaps with black bags, who thumped and talked to me just as the others did, and asked all sorts of questions. Alienists, they were—they pronounced me quite sane, and not needing a guardian in the least. Of course I was a natural-born Canadian, and over twenty-one—considerably over twenty-one!—so there was nothing for it but for them to let me walk out of the place with Alfred, between a double row of scientists who looked fit to strangle both of us! Both smoking cigarettes, and chatting coolly in what has since come to be called Primitive Nordic; he'd picked up quite a bit of it even then. To see us, one wouldn't have thought there was a professor on earth. Neat trick, what?

That seemed a beautiful arrangement

of everything to me, but of course Alfred knew more of the modern world,—knew that one has to have money to get along. Arranged for a very decent stipend from the Museum for me—I'm on their books as a research-worker in paleontology—in return for my allowing the professors to consult me. And then I'm to get a neat little sum when I have completed the grammar.

Good old Alfred! Fortunately, I was able to return the compliment; had him appointed my instructor at a very neat salary, with that Blakey chap from Oxford as his assistant. Of course Blakey helped me with the grinding—you remember Blakey—but I really learned English from Alfred as we tramped over the mountains, fishing and shooting.

Learned other things too—Alfred seemed to realize even from the first that I was a Leader, and should learn—well, the things a Leader has to know nowadays. Taboos, you know, though you don't call them that as a rule—not to shoot sitting birds, and all that sort of thing. Really more important than reading and writing; much more so.

Of course we dropped my old name. Only Alfred himself has learned to pronounce it correctly: *Lom-ssik*—quite different sound to the *l* and *m*, and the *k* more like in the German *ich*. I asked Alfred if he'd mind my taking the name of Saunders. He seemed pleased; told me of his brother Dick, lost in the war. Didn't suggest it, but I thought it would please him. I—of course I was quite unfamiliar with the customs then—I proposed the ceremony of blood-brotherhood, but naturally he didn't take to that; told me it just wasn't done—shocked! But he came back into the room and said that such silly things really didn't mean anything; it was a matter of how two chaps felt. Then he put his hand on my shoulder and swore at me. Really the same thing, you know.

HE came to know about the Golden-haired Girl. Didn't say much; just nodded, but of course I understood how he felt. We talked about her a lot, and he agreed with me that she was very sensible. Queer, you know; I just couldn't get over the feeling that Lal-is-ooa was still sitting waiting for—er—to hear the Bear Song. Sometimes when we'd been fishing or shooting in the mountains, I'd sing the Bear Song as we came home. It would almost seem—Well, Alfred asked me to stop it; tough

on his nerves, you understand. And besides some one might hear me; it *would* sound rather absurd—a couple of chaps with Greener doubles under their arms!

His sister came across from England for a visit. Charming girl, Beatrice. We became excellent friends; it happened that Alfred was very busy at the time, so we were together a great deal. Stayed six months, but her father became ill and she had to go back. Very charming girl; she's Lady Marmont now, you know—married Sir Charles, of Sussex.

Then I developed a habit of going shooting alone. Always seemed to end up at the foot of the glacier; seemed to think I might find a way of going back, or something. Alfred tried to prevent me—morbidity, he said—but I'd manage to sneak up every few days. Two years of that. Just couldn't get away from that beastly glacier, it seemed.

Then, as I was going up one day, I noticed that a piece of ice had dropped from the front; sort of large chip, perhaps ten feet thick. Of course I went rushing to look in at the fresh surface.

WELL, old Alfred thought surely I had gone insane at last when I came bursting in on him in his office. Must have looked freakish, with my hat and collar gone, and my hair all rumpled up. Had lost my gun, of course. He practically knew I was insane when I told him; he wouldn't believe me until he had climbed back up with me and looked for himself.

The Golden-haired Girl. . . . One of the men of my tribe had chanced to see those beastly little Eskimos chase me into the Trap, and had carried the news home. While our fellows were out hunting up the Eskimos and giving them our compliments, Lal-is-ooa and her sister had started out to look for me. Silly, of course, for a sensible girl like Lal-is-ooa, but I suppose she wouldn't believe what the men told her about the Trap—hoped to get out alive somehow. El-ss tried to dissuade her, but when she found that she couldn't, she went with her. El-ss always was a brick.

Of course that's all tommyrot about Lal-is-ooa trying to commit suicide—most absurd story I ever heard! Too sensible. Tried to creep down the ice to look in, and slipped. Both of them. They'd found my tracks; that's why they fell so close to me. Just a little higher up, and they'd have been several thousand years more in coming out; the thing

moves slightly slower than the average glacier,—trifle over an inch a year at present,—varying, of course, according to the variations of climate. Might stand still a few centuries under proper conditions. Very fortunate, though, that they fell where they did.

OF course we had the best equipment available, *that* time—the Government covered the expenses. And they'd perfected that new needle to shoot electric impulses into the heart; helped the effects of the adrenalin. They came out of it beautifully.

Really beastly embarrassing, though, when the scientist chaps came flocking around; I'd been through all that. We managed to keep them at a distance for a long time with a story of the girls being too weak to be disturbed, but at last they began to get quite crusty. It was Alfred and El-ss who thought of a way round it; clever, both of them! Of course Alfred could talk Primitive Nordic very well indeed by this time.

I really think I never was so amused as on the day we finally allowed the professors into the room. Kasherman was just reaching out to pull the bed-covers off them; I've never liked the fellow since—indecent, even if one is a scientist. Alfred just blew a little puff of smoke in the air and asked quietly if he wanted to see Mrs. Saunders. They hadn't noticed the rings on either of the girls' fingers until then.

Thunderstruck! Old chap, I do wish you could have seen it—really just too good. O'Neill was the only one who really appreciated the point of it; threw back his great shaggy head and laughed in their faces. Said "Squads East!"—or something of the sort, and led the funeral march from the room with his big shoulders shaking. Great chap, O'Neill. Of course they talked of a lawsuit, but I consulted my solicitor and he said they didn't have the ghost of a show. Knew it, too—that suit never came off. . . .

Of course we— But here come Lalis and Elsie in the car. They've been to a bridge-party with the parson's wife; said they'd pick Alfred up on the way back. Quite a brick, Elsie; always was. She and Alfred are rather idiotically in love, for married persons. Let's walk out and meet them, in case Alfred isn't along. Never *can* trust a woman, you know, to put a motor in a garage without wrecking the beastly place!

There's Murder



By ROY CHANSLOR

Who wrote "*The Game of Death*" and "*The Eternal Light*."

Illustrated by Joseph Franké

The Story So Far:

ON the evening of February 15, 1932, a girl was playing the violin in a house in New York, a girl who was young and beautiful—and blind: and who was moreover gifted with a strange power. With her were her father—Daniel Tyler, a former district attorney; and Nathaniel Benson, a young scientist.

As she played, her small glowing face, so tender and alive became transfigured. Benson stole a look of curious awe at her. This, he knew, was genius.

For a long time Ruth played; then suddenly, in the midst of it, there was a crashing discord and the music ceased.

The girl stood stiffly, bow aloft. Her face, except for two vivid spots of color on her cheek-bones, was dead white. Her fingers trembled on the strings, then were quiet.

"Murder!" she said, hoarsely. "*Murder!* Black hate. . . . A mind churning with hate! Death. . . . Death. . . . Death! Kill all rulers—all kings. Kill Roosevelt!"

She gave a little gasp of horror.

"He is going to shoot Mr. Roosevelt!"

"Roosevelt is speaking at Miami Beach tonight!" Benson cried.

He ran to the radio, turned the dials. A confused roar, then a voice, an excited voice, could be heard, the voice of the radio announcer at the very scene:

"An assassin has just attempted to kill the President-elect! Mr. Roosevelt is unharmed, but Mayor Cermak of Chicago and several others were struck by bullets. The man is being overpowered!"

Later Benson and Tyler faced each other across the desk in the library. Upstairs at last, Ruth was asleep.

"Well?" Tyler asked.

"Mr. Tyler," said Benson, "this is nothing supernatural. But we may be on the threshold of something so big—so important—so far-reaching in all its implications that it may affect the whole future of mankind.

"It's something that science has not been able to explain yet. We know that some persons, a very rare few, seem to have the power of receiving, as it were, *thoughts* or *images* or *something* from the minds of others. Almost as if the mind were a sort of super-acute radio antenna. Your daughter seems to have this power to a remarkable degree. Think what it may mean to people who are in danger, if, instead of knowing when disaster strikes, *she can foretell it!*"

"What a terrible responsibility for a child!" said Tyler.

"And for us," Nat said, gravely; for by the advice of Dr. Jan Karasc, an eminent psychiatrist, Tyler had engaged him, without Ruth's knowledge, to live with them and study her extraordinary power.

A few weeks later this power was manifested again. This time also it was while the blind girl was rapt in the music of her violin that the message came to her—some one, somewhere hated with a depth of fury that meant murder. And finally the name came to her—Paul Gordon.

Tyler looked up that name, found it that of a wealthy financier. And feeling in duty bound to warn the man, they called upon him at his country place—a great estate, close-fenced and heavily guarded, where he lived with his son David, his young second wife Carlotta, his daughter Hélène and his adopted daughter Doris.

in the Air

A really new idea makes this fine story the outstanding novel of the season—for it is an idea that forecasts what may be the next step in the evolution of mankind.

Do not fail to read it.

He proved skeptical of Ruth's power and of their warning—though the guards about him proved what he denied: that he lived in fear of attack.

But a few nights later, the message came to Ruth again; and Nat Benson called Gordon on the telephone to warn him.

"Good God, man, let me *alone!*" Gordon replied angrily. "Can't you understand—"

But his voice over the phone was drowned in the crash of a pistol shot. *(The story continues in detail:)*

GORDON'S eyelids flickered. He blinked spasmodically in the bright glare of the light. Then he raised one hand, half-shaded his face and opened his eyes slowly. He was on the bed; and bending over him was his beautiful wife Carlotta, in negligee, her face filled with anxiety, her dark eyes clouded with concern.

He felt her cool hand on his forehead, which throbbed terribly. At sight of his open eyes Carlotta gave a little gasp and bent closer to him. His head still rang, rang with the sound of a shot, and with the terrific impact of something against his skull. He felt the flesh at the roots of his hair gingerly. There was a great lump there, and something wet.

Carlotta smiled, then, tenderly and brushed her lips against his head where it throbbed. "Darling," she breathed, "you are all right?"

"I—I don't know," said Gordon shakily. "My head—"

Then he saw the others grouped back of Carlotta: his young daughter Hélène pale and trembling; Doris, white-faced but controlled; Johnson the servant; Nelson the squat broad-shouldered Swede in



charge of the night outposts; and his son David, who now pushed closer and bent over him.

"You must have struck your head on the edge of that table," David said. He indicated an overturned table beside the bed. It was the heavy, square bedside table on which the reading-lamp had stood. The broken lamp lay beside it.

"But there—there was a shot," Gordon said, his mind clearing. He sat bolt upright quickly, ignoring Carlotta's hands, glancing quickly at Nelson. "Nelson!" he said. "You caught the fellow?"

Nelson shook his head, puzzled.

"None of the boys saw a soul," he said.

Carlotta gently but insistently forced Gordon back onto the pillow.

"Now, Paul," she said softly, "you



Ruth's voice was low and intense. "It's here—danger! Some one with murder in his heart. . . . Phone Gordon, quickly!"

"Yes sir," said Johnson. "It was off the hook."

"Now, Paul, you lie back and rest," Carlotta interposed. "What has the phone got to do—"

"Was anyone on the wire?" Gordon interrupted, addressing his son.

"Dad, I—I don't know," David confessed. "I was pretty excited, you see. Thought you'd been shot, at first, when I saw that gash in your head. I—I just remember jiggling the hook madly until the operator answered. Then I called Dr. Grace."

Gordon stopped the sudden general babble of voices with a gesture and reached for the telephone, called Tyler's number. Again he motioned for silence, as questions started to well up from the group about the bed. . . .

In the house in East Seventy-ninth

must lie still until Dr. Grace comes. David got him on the phone."

At the word "phone" Gordon struggled suddenly to rise. He remembered now. The phone! Carlotta was trying to press him back, but he waved her aside and sat up, his eyes going to the telephone on the stand at the other side of his bed. The receiver was in place.

"The phone," he said hoarsely. "The phone. Was it off the hook?"

"Why—I don't know," said David. "Johnson got here first. Did you notice, Johnson?"



Street, Daniel Tyler, an arm about Ruth's shaking shoulders, was trying to soothe the blind girl. Her nerves still quivered from the shock; and her great dark eyes, so normal in appearance, were dilated.

Nat, who had hurried for a glass of water for Ruth, hovered about helplessly. Then the phone rang, and he seized it quickly. His face lighted up with relief at the sound of Gordon's voice. He covered the mouthpiece with one hand and said reassuringly to Ruth and her father:

"It's Gordon! He's all right!"

Then he was listening again. The trembling shoulders of the blind girl were quiet, suddenly. With her father, she pressed close to Nat, as he talked to Gordon.

"Amazing!" they heard Nat saying. "Certainly. We could come at once. . . . Very well. Tomorrow morning. Ten?"

He flashed Tyler a look. Tyler nodded.

"Ten it is, Mr. Gordon," said Nat. "Good night."

Nat turned toward the eager faces of Tyler and Ruth.

"There *was* a shot," he said; "but thanks to your warning, Ruth, he threw himself out of its way. He did strike his head against a table, but it's nothing serious."

Ruth drew in her breath sharply.

"And the—the killer?" she half-whispered.

Nat shook his head, puzzled.

"Haven't found a sign of him yet," he said.

"Then—it will come again!" Ruth whispered. "Oh, I *know* it will come again!"

Back in the big house on the hill, Gordon was waving aside the queries on everybody's lips.

"Let me ask the questions," he said.

They subsided, and he turned toward Nelson.

"They're searching the place, of course?" he said.

"Goin' over it with a fine-toothed comb," said Nelson. "I got the day men out too. We'll get him if he's still in the grounds."

"Good," said Gordon. "Where were you, Nelson, when you heard the shot?"

"Main gate, talkin' to Cooke," said Nelson. "House was all dark when we heard it. Then the lights began to come on all over it. I don't see how he could get away."

"Search the house too," said Gordon.

"Aye," said Nelson. He gave a little salute and was gone.

Gordon surveyed the others, slowly. Hélène and Doris, like Carlotta, were in negligee. David wore a heavy silk dressing-gown over his pajamas, Johnson a woolen bathrobe.

"You all heard the shot?" Gordon asked.

There was a chorus of affirmatives, excited nods and everyone began to talk at once.

"—reading in my room," he heard David say. "When I heard—"

"—had just turned out my reading light," Doris was saying.

"—was asleep," said Carlotta. "I woke with a start—"

"—was lying awake, in the dark," Hélène said.

"—and when I got to your door it was unlocked," Johnson's voice, stronger, rose above the others. "I hurried in and saw you lying—"

"Just a moment," said Gordon sharply. "*Which* door was unlocked?"

"Why, the hall door," said Johnson. "When I saw you—"

"Yes?" said Gordon.

"I ran to your side," said Johnson. "I—I thought you'd been shot. Then I saw you'd hit your head on the table. The—the bullet missed you and plowed right through the bed. Look at that hole in the mattress."

Gordon stared down at the bed.

"The shot came from the direction of the window," Johnson said. "See how the hole runs."

DAVID had dropped to his knees and was peering under the bed. He gave a sharp exclamation, and rose, holding out a misshapen slug in the palm of his hand.

"That's right," he said. "It must have

come from the window. It went through the mattress, struck the iron rail at the side, ricocheted up against the springs and then dropped to the floor."

Everyone stared at the bullet in David's palm. It was an ugly thing. Hélène gave a little shudder and covered her face with her hands. Johnson went to the window and leaned out. David joined him. Johnson pointed to a ledge about five feet below the window, clearly visible in the moonlight. It extended along the entire side of the house, three or four feet above the tops of the series of French windows opening off a balcony which ran along the second floor.

"See," Johnson said. "An agile man could gain that ledge from the balcony. And the balcony is easily accessible from the ground. He could have stood on the ledge and fired through the open window."

"By George, you're right!" David exclaimed.

The others, except Gordon, clustered about the window, peering down excitedly, talking, exclaiming. They turned at Gordon's voice. "But the hall door was locked," he said quietly but positively. "I locked it myself before I went to bed."

"Then maybe he came *in* by the window and escaped by the door!" David said.

Hélène gave a little cry of fear.

"Then he's still in the house!"

Doris moved to her quickly, put an arm about her trembling shoulders.

"If he is, the men will soon find him," she said soothingly.

Gordon flashed her a look of admiration. She had nerve, that girl!

FROM the driveway came the sound of a car. Headlights flashed for a moment against the window.

"That will be Dr. Grace," said David. Then he took command, turning to the three women. "You'd better all go to your rooms. Johnson and I will stand by."

"But I'm—afraid," Hélène quavered. "I'll stay with you," said Doris gently. "Please," said David. "Go to your rooms."

"No," said Gordon. "My sitting-room. It's safer there."

David nodded. Doris, her arm still about Hélène, gently urged her toward the door to the other room. Gordon nodded at Carlotta to follow.

"But I must stay," she protested. She

placed her hand on his head again, softly. "My place is here."

Gordon smiled up at her, kissed the white hand.

"Thank you, darling," he said. "But you'd best go too."

She shook her dark head in rebellion.

"Please," said her husband.

She hesitated a moment, then bent swiftly and brushed her lips against his and as swiftly left the room. Doris and Hélène followed. The bell rang, and Johnson went to admit the Doctor.

David stood near the bed, looking down into his father's face, gravely.

"Do you—do you think it was *he*?" he asked.

Gordon put both hands over his eyes in a sudden gesture.

"My God, Dave," he said. "I don't know."

NAT slowed the car as if to stop when they approached the gate, but the man in the small lodge quickly swung it open and waved them through. The big car climbed rapidly up the long winding driveway to the house which now gleamed in the morning sun.

The same burly man met them at the side entrance. He jumped forward quickly, opened the door and helped Ruth from the car. Then he hurried to the house phone and announced them. The door opened immediately, and he showed them inside.

They found Gordon in dressing-gown, a bandage about his head, seated in the big chair at the window. Another man lounged by his side. Gordon greeted them warmly and introduced his son David.

Nat and Tyler looked at the younger man with interest. He was a handsome fellow, about the same height as his father, of slighter build, but there was little if any facial resemblance between the two men. Tyler indicated the bandage on Gordon's head.

"You got quite a blow," he remarked. "It's nothing serious," Gordon said. Then turning to Ruth: "Thanks to you, young woman."

Ruth nodded slightly but said nothing. Gordon coughed, cleared his throat.

"I—I owe you all a sincere apology," he said awkwardly. "More of an apology than you realize, perhaps. I—well, to be frank, I was pretty skeptical about you. I—I might say even suspicious. I—checked up on you—even had you watched."

"So we gathered," Nat said with a grin.

"Of course I discovered that you were all—all—" he went on, hesitating.

"All right?" Nat asked, smiling.

"Exactly," said Gordon. "You will forgive me?"

"Quite," said Tyler briskly. "Perfectly natural. Now, suppose you tell us just what happened."

"Right," said Gordon heartily, relieved. He began a straightforward recital of the events of the night. Ruth closed her eyes, seemed to be absorbing every word. Nat watched Gordon's face, and his son's. Odd, the lack of resemblance, he thought. Curious, too, that while the son's expression changed as the elder man gave the details of his harrowing experience, the father's was strangely masklike.

Gordon stopped, glanced from Tyler, to Nat, to Ruth.

"And that's the story," he concluded. "My men went over every inch of the premises—and found no one."

Ruth nodded slowly but said nothing. Nat and Tyler went to the window and looked down, curiously.

"Yes," Tyler agreed. "A fairly agile person could have gained access to that ledge. But it's curious about that hall door. You're sure you locked it?"

He looked at Gordon inquiringly.

"I thought I was sure," said Gordon. "But perhaps I was mistaken. It seems unlikely that the—the gunman would try to escape through the house, doesn't it?"

"Yes," said Tyler. "Who else lives on this floor?"

"Only Johnson," said Gordon.

"You trust him?" Tyler asked.

"Absolutely," said Gordon. "He's been with me for years."

"Who else has access to that door from the *inside*?" pursued Tyler.

DAVID GORDON gave a little snort of impatience.

"This line is a waste of time," he snapped. "The man obviously got in by the window."

"I dare say," said Tyler calmly. "But some one *might* have come in by that door. I merely asked who has access to it?"

David shrugged resignedly.

"I, for one," he said.

"Only my immediate family," the elder Gordon interposed. "All the other servants, the guards, the entire staff of the estate, have quarters in the outbuild-

ings. None of them can even get into the house after it is closed for the night."

"What quarters are used by your family?" Tyler asked.

AS if exasperated, David Gordon threw up his hands, and walked to the window, out of which he gazed with an elaborate show of unconcern. Nat stole a curious glance at his broad back, then looked at Ruth. Those disquieting sightless eyes were fixed on the elder Gordon. She seemed to be paying little attention to his actual words. It was as if, rather, she was trying to probe into his soul.

"They all occupy separate apartments on the second floor," said Gordon. "That is, the floor directly below this. My daughter Hélène is just below this apartment. Doris has the apartment adjoining, toward the front of the house. My wife occupies the one just beyond that of Doris."

"All three of these apartments open off that balcony?" Tyler asked.

"Yes," said Gordon. "And my son's quarters are in the front of the house, opposite those of my wife. I—since I've been ill—that's been for several months—my wife and I have had separate apartments."

David Gordon turned suddenly.

"What earthly difference does it make where we all sleep?" he demanded. "A thug shot at my father from the window. That's that—and we seem to be losing sight of it."

"It just puzzles me that no one saw this thug, that's all," said Tyler quietly. "To gain the ledge, he had to get on that balcony, off of which three apartments open. Then, after the shot, he would have had to drop to the balcony again."

"That's so," said David. "By George, maybe he did escape through the house, after all!"

"At any rate, he escaped," said Gordon. "Somehow, God knows how, he managed to slip in past my guards and then to slip *out* again."

"These guards," Tyler said. "You can trust them?"

"Beyond a doubt," said Gordon promptly. "They are hand-picked men, all furnished by the agency with which I have done business for years, the same people who provide guards for my banks."

"Perhaps one or more of them was bribed," suggested Nat.

"No, no," said Gordon. "That's im-

possible. Believe me, he doesn't work like that."

"He?" said Nat quickly.

"I—I mean whoever is behind this," said Gordon. "I—I—"

"Mr. Gordon," Tyler interrupted sharply, "can't *you* tell us who is behind this?"

"I?" Gordon said. "My dear fellow—"

"Good God, man if we *knew*—" David Gordon put in.

Tyler disregarded the younger man, bent a searching look upon the father.

"You have no enemies?" he asked.

"There—there are cranks, of course," Gordon said. "Fanatics who might hate a man of my—in my situation. In fact, I must tell you, gentlemen, there was a previous attempt to kill me."

NAT and Tyler gave short exclamations of surprise.

"So?" said Tyler. "This was before our first warning?"

"Yes," said Gordon. "Several months ago. It—it was kept out of the papers. I—I don't want publicity. Even my family, with the exception of Dave, does not know about it. But a bomb—a time bomb was found in my car. It was sheer luck. The car stalled, and my chauffeur had to get out some tools. He found the bomb in the tool-trunk."

"Did you notify the police?" asked Tyler.

"No," said Gordon. "That would have meant publicity. We can't afford that kind of notoriety. The banks are under enough strain as it is. People would be—well—nervous, if a thing like that about a man in my situation got out. My chauffeur was very cool about it. He'd been in the army, and knew something about explosives. He doused the thing in a bucket of water, and then removed the mechanism. It was a devilish-looking contrivance. If he hadn't found it—I'd have been blown to bits."

"You don't know of anyone who could have planted it?" Nat asked.

Gordon shook his head. David turned away from the window, suddenly. His face was flushed. He raised a clenched fist.

"It's like those cowardly murderers to strike like that!" he said passionately. "By God, we'll never rest till we've destroyed them all!"

Nat and Tyler looked at him keenly.

"Then *you* have some idea?" said Tyler quietly.

"I only know that crooks and gang-

sters hate and fear my father," he said hotly. "You see, he's behind a concentrated campaign to break their filthy hold on this country. He's spent a lot of money doing it. And it's only the beginning. We're going to smoke those rats out if it takes every dollar we've got!"

"Ah," said Tyler softly. "And they—the underworld knows about this campaign?"

"They *must* know about it," said David.

"It's supposed to be a secret," Gordon interposed. "And what Dave's told you is confidential, of course. But somehow, these—these criminals have found out my connection with this organization. That's the only explanation."

"That's why they want to kill him," David broke in again. "They're afraid he'll wipe them out."

"That may explain the bomb," Tyler said.

"May?" said David. "Of course it explains it! And last night's attempt too. These fellows are fighting for their crooked lives. They'll stop at nothing."

"I see," said Tyler. "And what do you want us to do?"

"We thought—perhaps your daughter—could help us," said Paul Gordon hesitantly.

"We're at your service," said Tyler. "We'd like to protect you, if we can, of course. But even more important to us, we may be able to carry on our experiment with Ruth's extraordinary powers, an experiment which may mean much to all mankind."

"There is no way that I can express my gratitude for what your daughter has already done," said Gordon. "She saved my life last night. And as far as I'm concerned, she proved her powers. I hesitate to ask it—but I have a suggestion. It will involve a great deal of trouble for you. Perhaps even danger. If it were for myself alone—"

HE stopped, and looked at Tyler hesitantly.

"What is it?" asked Tyler quietly.

"Would you consider remaining here, on the estate, you and your daughter, for a time?" Gordon asked. "What I'm getting at is this: should another attempt be made on my life, perhaps she can—well—foresee it. And being on the spot, bring about the apprehension of this—the assassin."

Tyler turned toward Ruth. She was



Nat flung himself forward; he felt his arms grasp swirling legs. Then he and a twisting figure were rolling over and over.

sitting just as before, quietly listening. Her great eyes were closed. Now she opened them, as if sensing her father's inquiring look.

"I'll be glad to stay," she said, "if you and Nat do too."

"That can be arranged," said Gordon eagerly. "You shall be my guests. There is a very comfortable and roomy cottage. It will accommodate you nicely. If you can see your way clear—"

"I think it's an excellent idea," said Nat quickly.

"Then we'll stay," said Tyler.

"Splendid!" Gordon cried.

He wrung Tyler's hand. Nat was watching David, who frowned slightly. But on catching Nat's eyes, he smiled

suddenly and murmured: "Very kind of you. We appreciate this."

At Gordon's urgent insistence they agreed to return to town, get their things and come back to the estate that evening in time for dinner. Gordon promised to have the cottage put in order at once. . . .

They were clear of the grounds and half a mile down the road before anyone spoke. Then Nat, turning toward Tyler, said: "For a father and son, those fellows certainly don't look much alike."

"They do not," said Tyler.

Ruth seemed surprised.

"Why, their voices are much alike," she said. "The same quality. It never occurred to me they weren't father and

son. Of course it's possible they aren't. One thing I am sure of—that man is withholding something from us. Something important."

"I believe you're right," said Tyler. "As for me, I'm still trying to figure out how a gunman could sneak into the armed camp, fire a shot which aroused the entire household, and then just—vanish."

CHAPTER VII

THE ALARM

WHILE Nat waited for Ruth and her father to complete their packing, he telephoned Dr. Karasc—his first opportunity to inform the little psychiatrist of the new developments in the case. He reported everything in detail. Dr. Karasc clucked excitedly when he told him how Ruth had picked up the definite message that death for Gordon was about to strike.

"Magnificent!" he broke in. "Magnificent! My boy, you are on the track of something! Something tremendous! And now you have something to get your teeth into, eh? This Gordon's—ah—reluctance to show his hand should make the thing even more fascinating, no? You will see that young woman work this out in spite of him, eh? Ah, I wish I could be there. What an experiment! A scientific experiment, my boy, with this Gordon the—ah—the guinea pig!"

But Karasc would vouchsafe no opinions, no advice. It was up to Nat.

When he came out of the library, Nat saw Tyler, Ruth and her personal maid, Olga, descending the stairs. Raines, the butler, helped them arrange their luggage, and Nat started the car.

It was dusk when they reached the Gordon estate again. Johnson met them and escorted them to an attractive two-story cottage directly across the garden from the main house.

Johnson called a manservant to assist the men in their unpacking, and himself hovered about until he was sure they were comfortable. The man, he explained, would be available at any time they needed him. As for Miss Tyler's maid—there were only three bedrooms in the cottage, but an extra cot could be placed in Ruth's room for her. Or she could have a room to herself in one of the servants' cottages.

Ruth herself suggested that the latter

plan would be satisfactory; for in spite of her handicap she readily learned the geography of rooms and doors and furniture.

She was therefore installed in a large room on the second floor, with its windows overlooking the garden and the big house; and Olga bustled about with her things before taking her own bag to the servants' cottage. Nat and Tyler were given the adjoining bedrooms on the ground floor of the cottage, opening off the enormous living-room, which was lined with well-filled bookcases.

Nat and Tyler were relaxing over their pipes before starting to dress for dinner, when Gordon appeared at the cottage, alone. He seemed in good spirits.

"Just wanted to see that you were fixed up all right," he said.

"Everything's shipshape," said Tyler.

"Good," said Gordon.

He took a seat, lighted a cigarette, began to chuckle slightly.

"I say," he said. "I've fixed up a nice little surprise for my friend the assassin for his next visit."

Nat and Tyler looked at him inquiringly.

"I've had workmen here all day installing an elaborate alarm and illumination system," Gordon went on. "The most ingenious thing you ever saw!"

He beamed at them proudly, like a small boy, Nat thought, bragging about a new toy. Tyler asked him about the alarm system.

"It's an invisible ray," said Gordon. "It shoots across every entrance to the house, doors, windows, skylights, everything. Anyone or anything at all passing through the ray breaks a circuit which automatically sounds the alarm and at the same time completely illuminates the entire grounds! They call the thing the 'invisible eye.' It's based, of course, on the photo-electric cell."

"SOUNDS thorough enough," Nat laughed. "Suppose it's impossible for anyone to get into the house now without bringing down the whole place on him."

"Utterly impossible," said Gordon complacently.

"The next invader, if there is another one, ought to get a warm reception," said Tyler, smiling.

"I think there'll be another," said Gordon soberly. "And we've got to catch him!"

"We'll, let's hope so," said Tyler.

"Between your 'invisible eye' and Ruth, we ought to be able to pull it off."

"I'm counting on it," said Gordon. He cleared his throat. "I—I wanted to have a word or two with you about the whole situation here before dinner," he went on. "I think I've worked out a plausible reason for your presence here. You see, I don't want to alarm the women of the family any more than necessary. Of course the events of last night have them all in something of a state. But I have assured them that we are all quite safe. I—I wouldn't like them to know that you are here to—well, to protect me. You understand?"

Tyler nodded.

"My explanation is this," Gordon resumed: "Mr. Tyler, as an old friend, and a former district attorney, is to work with me in my campaign against the underworld. I have deemed it advisable to tell them, now, of that. Naturally, in view of Miss Tyler's—condition, he would want her to be with him. And Mr. Benson, as his confidential assistant—"

"Would naturally be with me also," interrupted Tyler. "That sounds all right to me."

"One more thing," said Gordon hesitantly, lowering his voice. "I think it just as well that we shouldn't mention Miss Tyler's—extraordinary—powers."

HE looked at Tyler, half-apologetically.

"As you wish," said Tyler.

"Then—I think that's all, sir," said Gordon, rising. "Unless there's anything—anything I can do for you?"

Tyler looked at him through half-lowered lids.

"Mr. Gordon," he said, "I didn't want to speak of this in the presence of your son, this morning. But I think it's only fair to tell you—you were not alone in your campaign of—shall we say checking up?"

"Eh?" said Gordon. His eyes looked startled. And yet, both men noticed, none of this showed in his face.

"I mean, we were rather curious about you," pursued Tyler. "And we took the liberty of—of examining your—past."

Gordon stared at them, his eyes dilating.

"We found—" Tyler began, then paused, glanced at Gordon significantly.

The man wet his lips but said nothing.

"A stone wall," Tyler finished, looking at Gordon keenly. There was no sign

of either alarm or relief in the man's face. Only his eyelids twitched slightly; then he controlled them.

"Gentlemen," he said a trifle huskily, "that is my affair. I—please don't ask me something I—I do not feel at liberty to answer. This—this is a family matter—known only to myself, my son and my wife. I—I can assure you that there is nothing discreditable—"

He stopped, gestured with his hands. "We weren't implying that there was," said Tyler quickly. "Please don't think us meddlers, Mr. Gordon. But we've done you a service—"

"A service I can never repay," said Gordon. "Believe me, Mr. Tyler, I appreciate— But you know that. Will it suffice if I swear, on my honor, that this—this is not a guilty secret?"

"Of course," said Tyler. "But it might be of incalculable help to us—"

"No, no," said Gordon. "It's impossible. I have just assured you—"

He stopped at a sound. Ruth was coming down the unfamiliar stairs, with Olga's hand on her elbow. She hesitated a moment, then called out a good evening to Gordon, and descended into the room. Gordon replied. Then he coughed slightly and glanced at his watch.

"If you'll excuse me, now," he said. "I—I must dress for dinner. We shall meet at eight."

"Very good," said Tyler.

He accompanied Gordon to the door. The man held out his hand, suddenly. Tyler extended his own and Gordon clasped it firmly. He raised his left hand to Tyler's shoulder and stood thus for a moment.

"Thank you," he said huskily. "From the bottom of my heart."

Then he turned quickly and was gone.

"What a strange man!" Ruth said.

"And yet—curiously touching just now, didn't you think?" said Nat.

"Yes," said Tyler. "I—somehow I believe in him. Irritating, his persistent covering up. But I can't help feeling he has his reasons."

"He has," said Ruth, quietly. "He's—he's deathly afraid of something. And yet not for himself alone."

NAT stepped from the house into the soft spring dusk, lighted a cigarette and prepared for a short turn in the garden. He was dressed for dinner, and waiting for Tyler and Ruth. He heard the soft murmur of water, and advanced

to where a fountain played, surrounded by stone benches.

On one of these, still warm from the afternoon sun, he sat and curiously surveyed the great house, ablaze now with lights. He picked out Gordon's room, and then his eyes dropped to the lighted window just below it. That would be the daughter's room, evidently.

Behind him a voice said: "Well, Mr. Detective! Looking the ground over?"

He turned quickly. Doris, in softly clinging yellow dinner-gown, a light chiffon wrap over her shoulders, was smiling at him from the edge of the fountain. He rose, smiling, flicked the cigarette from him and went toward her.

"Good evening," he said.

She held out her hand and he took it. It was firm and boyish.

"You *are* a detective, aren't you, Mr. Benson?" she asked.

Nat laughed and shook his head.

"Nothing so romantic," he said. "Just a commonplace 'confidential assistant.'"

"Oh," she said, raising her eyebrows quizzically. "Then your—your employer is the detective?"

Nat discovered that he was still holding the firm hand. He dropped it and laughed again.

"Sorry," he said, "but you're wrong again. Mr. Tyler and your father are doing some work together; and I—well, I'm just a sort of appendage. I trot along where Mr. Tyler goes."

"Oh," she said. "I see." Then, frankly: "Well, I'm terribly glad you're here, anyhow. We don't seem to have many guests any more. And it's—well, it's inclined to be a bit dull. I expect you're going to be a popular young man. I—don't you think I ought to have some priority rights? After all, I saw you first!"

"Well, perhaps that can be arranged," he said, grinning.

She moved closer and looked into his face, seriously.

"Tell me," she said. "Really, honestly, *why* are you here?"

"But I've told you," he protested.

"Nonsense," she said. "It must have something to do with that—that attempt on Dad's life last night."

GRATEFULLY, Nat heard Tyler's voice, from the door of the cottage, calling out to him.

"Coming," he called back. Then he turned to Doris: "You'll excuse me? We shall meet at dinner, I hope."

The girl dropped her serious mien and smiled.

"Certainly," she said. "And prepare to sit at my right hand. I have already arranged *that*."

She laughed lightly, and was gone.

IN the living-room they met for the first time the other women of the household—Carlotta the darkly beautiful wife, and Hélène the slim and pretty daughter. Mrs. Gordon, very smart in a low-cut dark dinner gown, seemed only a few years older than the girls. Hélène was perhaps a year younger than Doris, and very sweet in her filmy pink organdy frock.

Gordon introduced them to Doris as well, and seemed surprised when he learned that they had met before. Doris explained the encounter on the road. Gordon frowned briefly, then said rather sharply: "Doris, I'm afraid I'll have to ask you not to take your car out of the estate again, for the present."

Mrs. Gordon and both girls looked equally astonished. As if by way of explanation, Gordon, concluded: "It's—well, it may be dangerous, just at this time."

An odd way, Nat thought, of reassuring the women of the household!

After dinner all returned to the living-room. Doris went to the radio and turned the dials until she obtained a dance program. Hélène, smiling mischievously, held out her arms in invitation. When Doris turned expectantly, Nat and Hélène were dancing.

David claimed Doris, and the others sat together, talking. When the tune stopped, they exchanged partners for the next dance. Doris' body was lithe and rhythmic in Nat's arms.

Presently a car entered the grounds, and in a moment there appeared a tall, white-haired man with ruddy cheeks, who was introduced as Dr. Samuel Grace, an old friend and the family physician. He had come for another look at Gordon's injured scalp.

The two men adjourned to Gordon's apartment for the examination. Ruth asked to be excused, bade everyone good-night, and left under the escort of her father for the cottage.

Hélène turned on the radio again, and Doris smiled an invitation to Nat. At the same time Carlotta rose, facing David and asked:

"Aren't you going to dance with me, Dave?"



"The police found the film-truck in a ditch, the driver bound and gagged. Seems the gunman trussed him up, and then ditched the truck."

Hélène shrugged good-naturedly, and watched the other couples.

Presently Gordon and Dr. Grace reappeared.

"This fellow's got a constitution of iron," said the physician. "We can take that bandage off in a day or two."

Nat was dancing with Carlotta, near the open French windows, when he heard the music of a violin from across the garden. He stiffened involuntarily, missed a step and stopped, listening, oblivious of the woman in his arms. She stared at him in surprise. He murmured an apology and continued the dance, trying to keep as near the windows as possible, straining for the sound of Ruth's violin above the dance-tune.

He heard it stop, then, suddenly. His impulse was to hurry to the cottage. But Tyler was there, and he knew it would look strange for him to dash away in the middle of a dance. Carlotta Gordon danced beautifully, but the dance seemed interminably long. Nat was searching his mind for an excuse to stop when Tyler reappeared, and the tune ended.

Nat darted a quick inquiring glance at Tyler, who gave an almost imperceptible nod of his head. Nat murmured his thanks to Mrs. Gordon, and started

to join him. The dance music resumed, and Doris came toward him. Tyler's nod was more pronounced now.

"Work to do," Nat said to Doris. "It's been delightful. Thank you. And now, good night."

Silently Nat and Tyler crossed the garden. There was a light in Ruth's window, but no sound now. Nat curbed his curiosity until they were inside the cottage. Then he blurted: "What happened?"

"It came again," Tyler said.

Nat's spine tingled.

"Olga had just left her for the night, when Ruth felt the—the compulsion to play," Tyler went on. "It was there—that hate. Nothing definite, nothing immediate. But that same steady, burning determination. Our killer will try again—that is certain."

IN the translucent green water of the tiled swimming-pool Nat, floating lazily, watched the two slim girls as they went up the ladder to the diving-platform, their lightly tanned skin gleaming in the sun. They scuffled briefly, laughing, to see who would go first. Then Hélène broke loose, ran out into the

board, hit the end smartly with both feet and arched into the air in a swan dive. Her green-clad body cleft the water smoothly.

Doris, very trim in her snug-fitting yellow suit—her favorite and characteristic color—was already in the air, her body doubled into a jackknife. It entered the water cleanly, close by Hélène. Then the two girls raced toward him, disappearing under the water, and in an instant Nat, spluttering and laughing, and being dragged down.

He wriggled free, ducked first one and then the other. At the edge of the pool Carlotta, looking smart and cool in a white sports frock, sat with Ruth on a gay-colored settee. The two girls and Nat climbed out of the pool near them, shaking themselves like terriers, while Carlotta and Ruth cried out in mock dismay.

Then all three flung themselves onto the warm white sand.

HARD to remember, Nat felt, that he was here not as a guest among gay, charming people, but on a grimly serious mission. Especially hard to remember, since nothing had happened to intrude that purpose into the indolent pleasure of the daily routine since that first night, two weeks ago, when Ruth had again felt murder stirring in that unknown mind.

Since then she had played every night, without result. Was it possible that the Unknown had given up his plan? Or—alarming thought!—that there was some sinister barrier now separating the mind of the Unknown from Ruth? Perhaps they had overestimated Ruth's power! *Could* the assassin strike without Ruth's picking up his intention? All this Nat wondered, as he lay basking in the sun, half listening to the voices of the girls. Well, there was nothing to do but wait.

Meanwhile, this was a delightful interlude, perhaps the more keenly pleasant because it *was* an interlude, a lull between storms. Probably, he thought, it would be better for him if it ended soon. Perhaps it was becoming too pleasant.

He glanced up, across his tanned forearm, at Doris and Hélène, now busily engaged in burying each other with sand. Each promptly hurled a handful at his head. He shook it, laughing, and relaxed again, face on his hands.

Flattering, he thought, to his youthful vanity to have two such girls vying good-naturedly for his attention. But

not to be taken too seriously. That he must guard against. In the case of Doris, especially. It wouldn't be hard to fall in love with Doris.

And that he mustn't do. This, after all, was not his life, this lotus-eating. He had work to do, a living to make; perhaps, if lucky, something important to do. And she—she was rich, used to every comfort, every luxury. No, he must not think too much about Doris!

He felt a hand gently brushing the sand from his hair, glanced up. Ruth was leaning over him, from the settee, a gentle tender smile on her face. He put his own muscular hand on hers, squeezed it affectionately, a comradely caress. A fleeting look of sadness crossed her delicate face, quickly passed.

He buried his face against his arms again.

Ruth sat back on the settee, fighting a sudden ache in her heart, realizing, suddenly, its cause. Nat—Nat. He had come to mean so much to her. Too much for just an affectionate friend. That instinct of hers to brush the sand from his hair—she understood it now. And the quick, brotherly pressure of his hand, had given her her answer. It was not to be hoped for. And yet—she couldn't help—hoping!

"Movies tonight!" Doris cried, as they rose from the dinner-table. "I saw the film-truck just before dinner."

GORDON nodded, smiling, and led the way to the private projection-room, where talking pictures were shown once or twice a week by special arrangement with near-by exchanges, who sent out operators too, to work the machines. Ruth enjoyed them as well as anyone, being able to follow them to her own satisfaction from the sound and dialogue.

It was eleven o'clock when the pictures ended.

Good-nights were exchanged, and Nat and Tyler started back to the cottage with Ruth, who was bubbling over with enthusiasm over the pictures.

At the side door the men saw the familiar film-truck, waiting to take the highly inflammable film back to the fireproof vaults of the exchange.

Johnson and the operator came out with the cans of film and handed them up to the driver. The operator got into his own car, waved good night and was off, the truck following. Nat called good night to Johnson, and they went on to the cottage.

Ruth and her father said they were tired and went to bed. But Nat was not sleepy. He took a book from one of the heavily stocked shelves and settled himself on the couch in the living-room. Absorbed, he took no account of the time. It was an hour, perhaps more, later when he heard the strains of the violin from above. Then they stopped, almost immediately.

He dropped the book and hurried to the stairs. Tyler came out of his room quickly, throwing a dressing-gown over his pajamas, and followed. Nat opened Ruth's door and reached for the light-switch. Her voice, low and intense, stopped him.

"No lights! Be very quiet, please. It's here. . . . Danger. Some one with murder in his heart. Whoever it is heard the music . . . worried. Phone Gordon, quickly."

Tyler found the phone in the darkness, called Gordon's private number, quietly gave the warning. Gordon seemed very cool, possessed. He would be on guard.

"Now keep very quiet," Ruth's voice said.

They waited, tense, for what seemed like minutes, before she spoke again.

"Now," she breathed. "He's reassured. Will try to get to Gordon."

"Inside the house or out?" Nat whispered.

"I don't know," she said.

"I'll have a look around," Nat said. "Stand by."

He felt his way down the stairs, let himself very quietly into the garden. Very softly he made his way toward the house sharply etched against the sky by the moonlight, stopping every few paces to listen. He heard nothing. Down at the main gate the light in the lodge burned reassuringly.

Yet somewhere an assassin was creeping toward the man on the top floor.

He crept closer to the house, peering intently into the shadows beneath Gordon's window. Only there did the moonlight fail to penetrate. He crouched, waiting, not daring to leave the shadows of the garden for the brightness of the lawn. A minute, two—three.

THEN—there was a terrific clamor. The alarm! The sky lighted up like day. House, garden, grounds stood out clearly in a steady glare. On the ledge, under Gordon's window, a man's figure clung. He turned a terrified face to the

light. Then he dropped, lithely, landing on the lawn on all fours, picked himself up and began to run.

With a shout Nat flung himself forward. The man, half-stopping, swerved, like an open field running half-back. Nat gathered himself and dived. He felt his hands grasp swirling legs; then he and a lashing, twisting figure were on the ground, rolling over and over.

CHAPTER VIII

LOVE SONG

NAT locked his legs tightly about the man's body, snaked his right arm swiftly under his chin, then with his left seized a wrist. He felt the gun drop from the man's hand and slide off his arm onto the ground. Though pinned securely, his body still writhed and jerked.

Then there was a confusion of voices, the sound of running feet. Nat looked up into the face of Nelson, the stocky Swede, who promptly pounced upon the struggling gunman. In a moment they had quieted him.

The lights had come on in the house, and the clang of the alarm had ceased; but the entire estate was still bathed in the glow of the powerful illumination system. David Gordon appeared, then Tyler and Ruth. Nat heard the elder Gordon's voice sharply ordering the women to remain in the house.

Willing hands jerked the prisoner to his feet. He was a powerful fellow, tall, broad-shouldered. He stared at them from a pockmarked face, defiantly. Surrounded by half a dozen men, he was dragged across the lawn, into the living-room.

Carlotta, Doris and Hélène, all in negligee, were there. Gordon unceremoniously ushered them out. The prisoner's defiance had given way to stolid, wordless indifference now. Gordon dismissed two of the guards. Two others held the prisoner.

Nelson and Harrigan, the burly man who maintained guard at the side entrance by day, stood over him watchfully. Harrigan, awakened from sleep, wore corduroy trousers over his pajamas, and one slipper, the other having been lost in the scuffle.

Ruth and her father came into the room. David Gordon glanced inquiringly at his father, who nodded and pulled out a chair for Ruth. She closed

her eyes and seemed to be listening intently.

Harrigan bent close to the prisoner, thrusting out his heavy jaw.

"All right, rod," he said harshly. "Make it fast. The bulls'll be here in a couple minutes. We don't want *you*. Spill your guts and you go clean."

THE prisoner merely shrugged, contemptuously.

"One of them tough private dicks, eh?" he sneered. "Bring on your bulls, Boy Scout."

Harrigan scowled and raised a fist as if to plant it on the man's jaw. But Gordon seized his arm. "Easy does it, Harrigan," he said. Then, to the prisoner, quietly: "Who sent you?"

"Don't bother me!" said the man scornfully.

David Gordon bent close to him.

"Was it Gaudio?" he said, in a low voice, barely distinguishable to the others.

"Who the hell is Gaudio?" demanded the prisoner.

"You know who—" began David Gordon angrily, but a pressure on his arm from his father stopped him. The younger man flashed a look at Nat, then stepped back, scowling.

Harrigan bent over the prisoner again.

"Listen, buddy," he said more calmly. "Why should you take this rap? We only want the guy that sent you."

"I don't know what you're talkin' about," growled the man. "I'm just a hood tryin' to pick up a few bucks. Nobody sent me."

"This aint no burglary rap," pursued Harrigan. "This is an attempted bump-off."

"Oh, yeah?" said the man. "Why should I wanta bump anybody off? Think I'm lookin' for the hot squat? Bring on your coppers, and let's get this over with."

"Better think this over before the police come," Gordon urged. "I'll make it easy for you, and nobody will ever know you told. *Who sent you?*"

"Nobody!" barked the prisoner. "I tell you it was just a private prowl. I sure picked a nice layout. What is this, the U. S. Mint?"

Ruth sat quietly in her chair, her face turned toward the prisoner, her eyes closed, her face expressionless. Neither Nat nor Tyler joined in the barrage of questions now flung at the man. Both were puzzled by David Gordon's quick,

"Was it Gaudio?" and by the father's prompt action in shutting the younger man off.

They sat listening intently, hoping that one of the questions would give them a clue to the mystery. But David Gordon asked no further questions, and the name Gaudio was not mentioned again.

There was no penetrating the stolid indifference of the prisoner. Tyler, in his experience as district attorney, had seen too many like him. He knew there was no making that breed talk. The futile questioning went on, however, until there was the sound of a car entering the grounds.

One of the guards appeared and said: "The bulls."

Gordon stepped back and wiped his forehead. He turned and swept the group with a look.

"Let me do the talking, please," he said.

It was a squad car, with a sergeant and three men. Neighbors had heard the alarm and phoned them.

"What's all the trouble?" the sergeant asked.

"We caught this fellow trying to burglarize the house," said Gordon. The man grinned and shrugged. To the sergeant, who now leaned over him, he said shortly: "You got me, copper. Let's get goin'."

"How'd you get into this place?" demanded the sergeant. "It's got more guards than a bank."

"Walked in," said the prisoner.

"By 'George!' Nat exclaimed. "I know. The film-truck!"

Gordon explained to the sergeant, who growled several futile questions at the prisoner. The man ignored them all.

"Come on," he said finally, impatiently. "I'm sleepy!"

AFTER a routine investigation, during which Gordon made this appear an ordinary case of attempted burglary, the police left with their prisoner.

"Well," said Tyler. "That's that. And we're no better off than we were before."

"Perhaps he'll talk when he realizes he's facing a good stiff prison term," said David Gordon grimly. "When the police get him to the stationhouse, they'll shoot so many questions at him he'll be dizzy."

"Questions about what?" said Tyler. "As far as they know, he's just a stupid burglar."

"I didn't want to tell those fellows anything," said Gordon. "They don't

know enough to keep quiet. But I know the local commissioner well. I'll have to take him partly into my confidence now. I think I can rely on him to avoid any publicity. He'll do the questioning."

"And it will do no good," said Tyler resignedly. He shrugged. "Who knows? Maybe he is a mere burglar!"

But Ruth shook her head positively.

"No," she said. "He came to kill. I got that very definitely. And *some one* sent him."

"What makes you so sure of that?" her father asked gently.

"Because there is a terrible hate in the mind of some—some person who is planning Mr. Gordon's death," she said. "But in the mind of this fellow, there was only determination, the thoughts of a man doing a *job*."

"I knew it," said Gordon. "Miss Tyler—if you could only learn *who* sent him!"

She shook her head slowly, passing a hand over her forehead.

"Ruth," said her father. "You get no *name*?"

Again she shook her head.

"Ruth," he pursued, "does the name *Gaudio* mean anything to you?"

NAT saw both Gordons stare at him sharply. Then their eyes went to Ruth's face. On the son's face was a look of terrible suspense; but on the father's was that expressionless mask.

"Gaudio?" Ruth repeated. "No, nothing."

Tyler was regarding David Gordon keenly.

"Who is Gaudio?" he asked quietly.

"Eh!" David jerked. "Oh, Gaudio. Why, he—"

"He's a well-known gangster," his father interrupted quickly.

"Yes, that's it," said David. "He's—he's a gangster. One of those we've been trying to get. I—I thought perhaps he—"

"The name seemed to mean nothing to the prisoner," said the elder Gordon.

"And it means nothing to me," said Tyler. "I never heard it before. Yet you say he's a *well-known* gangster?"

"It—it doesn't matter," said David. "Just a hunch. Guess he's not the man. Probably some other racketeer sent this fellow. I say, it's getting late. Hadn't we better—"

"A good idea," Tyler unexpectedly agreed. "Good night."

Once in the cottage, Tyler went direct-



"What is the matter, Nat?" Doris breathed. "Don't you—like me?"

ly to the telephone and gave a number. At Nat's inquiring look he said: "Phoning my friend Doc Crandall, the reporter. If Gaudio's a well-known gangster, Doc'll know him. . . . Hello. Doc Crandall, please. Oh, hello, Doc! Dan Tyler. . . . Fine, thanks. Just a question. Ever hear of a gangster named Gaudio? Supposed to be well-known, a big shot, in fact."

Ruth and Nat could hear the reporter's voice clearly.

"Gaudio?" he said. There was a short pause. Then: "Gaudio? Thought I knew 'em all, Mr. Tyler, but that's a new one on me."

IN the morning, before breakfast, David Gordon, dressed for the city, appeared at the cottage.

"Have to run into town," he said. "Thought perhaps you'd be gone before I returned. Wanted to say good-by and thank you for what you've done."

"Good-by?" said Nat, surprised.

"Why, yes," said David. "Suppose you'll all be going back to town, now that the danger's past."

"Oh," said Tyler. "The danger is past?"

"I should think so," said David. "After last night, those fellows won't try to get into this place again. They'll know they haven't got a chance. I wanted to tell you how much I appreciate—"

"Just a minute," Nat interrupted hotly. "Are you asking us to leave?"

David seemed astonished.

"Asking you?" he said. "Of course not. I—I just assumed you'd be going now. After all, we can't expect you to give all your time, indefinitely, to us. You—you must have other things to do."

"I guess they can wait," said Tyler coolly.

"Then you're *not* going?" David asked, as if greatly surprised.

"Not until this thing is cleared up—or your father asks us to go," said Tyler evenly.

"You—you really think there is something else to be done?" David asked.

"We do," said Tyler.

"Oh," said David. "Sorry. Please don't take offense. I—I was only thinking of you. Supposed you'd be only too glad—"

"Quite all right," Tyler said quickly.

"Naturally, we're only too glad to have you our guests as long as you want to stay," said David. "We can never repay—"

"I said it was quite all right," said Tyler quietly.

"Then I shan't say good-by," said David. "That's fine. Probably see you all at dinner."

He bowed and left the cottage. Nat stared after him.

"Well," he breathed. "What do you think of that?"

"I'm merely wondering, as you did

once, if that young man is really Gordon's son," said Tyler. "And I'm wondering a few other things, too."

It was late afternoon, and Nat and Tyler were lounging with Carlotta at the edge of the tennis court watching Hélène and Doris play, when Johnson appeared and asked the two men to come to Gordon's apartment. They excused themselves and followed the man.

He escorted them to Gordon and then went to his own room.

"I've some news," said Gordon, when they had seated themselves. "Got hold of my friend the commissioner the first thing this morning. He took personal charge of the case. There'll be no publicity. Well, in the first place, Benson, your hunch about the film-truck turned out to be right. The police found it in a ditch about a mile west of here last night. Driver was bound and gagged. Seems two men stuck him up as he was on his way here to pick up the cans. They got into the back of the truck, and at the point of a gun forced him to drive into the estate. They kept him covered while the films were loaded."

"BY George!" Tyler exclaimed. "We were standing within ten feet of that truck at the time!"

"One of the gunmen," Gordon went on, "that would be our prisoner, dropped off inside the grounds while the other made the driver go on up the road. Then he trussed him up, and ditched the truck. The driver identified the prisoner, which means he's got a stiffer charge to face, robbery with a gun instead of attempted burglary. The commissioner says he's a tough one, though. Wouldn't talk at all."

"They never do," commented Tyler.

"But we've got an ace in the hole!" said Gordon triumphantly. "The Baumes Law. It seems this man—name's Salvatore Espi—has a criminal record, two felony convictions. He's being held without bail for the truck robbery now. That's the third. The commissioner is holding off on the burglary charge, using it as a weapon to make him talk. Because *that* would be a fourth offense, which means mandatory life-imprisonment in this state. The commissioner has offered to bargain with him if he'll help convict the man who sent him, to reduce the robbery charge and forget the fourth charge entirely. When he thinks it over, I think he'll decide to save his own skin and *talk*."

Tyler shook his head slowly.

"I know these fellows too well," he said. "If this man was a torpedo, sent to kill you by an underworld lord, he'll take the rap, even life, without opening his mouth. It's not a mere matter of loyalty, either. Because he knows if he squealed and got off light, his life would not be worth a plugged nickel. That's the underworld way."

Gordon sighed heavily.

"My God," he said, "then I don't know *what* to do. Of course the police may pick up Espi's companion. The truck-driver gave a good description of him, and a general alarm has been broadcast. Maybe he'll be easier to handle."

"I'm afraid not," said Tyler. "They're all alike, Mr. Gordon. If they're hired killers, *nothing* can make them squeal. Another thing, though. You're probably safe for some time. Because your unknown enemy undoubtedly knows by this time just how hard it is to penetrate your stronghold, I expect he'll lie low now."

"That only postpones the danger," said Gordon. "After all, I can't keep myself and my family prisoners indefinitely. Why, we can never rest easy until we've got the man behind all this. We've got to get him! I—I'm counting on you—on your daughter."

Tyler regarded him keenly.

"I take it that means you want us to stay on here?" he asked.

The other man looked up in obvious astonishment.

"But of course I want you to stay!" he exclaimed. "It's—it's my only chance!"

NAT started to speak, but Tyler flashed him a warning glance. He had decided not to mention what had happened between them and David Gordon that morning.

"I—I know it's a lot to ask of you," Gordon went on. "The—the time—the possible danger. Of course, I won't urge you. . . . But I'd certainly appreciate—"

"Say no more about it," said Tyler. "We'll stay."

"Thank you," said Gordon. "I'm—I'm absolutely counting on you—your daughter getting through—getting the *name* of that man."

"But suppose she does?" said Nat. "That would be no evidence in a court of law."

Gordon extended his hand suddenly, clenched his fist, grimly.

"All I want," he said intensely, "is to know who he is!" . . .

In the living-room David was dancing with Hélène, Nat with Doris. The soft pressure of her body made his heart tremble. How lovely, how desirable, she was! They were close to the French windows when the tune ended. Nat dropped his arms, looked down into her shining eyes.

By an almost imperceptible motion she indicated the balcony. His heart leaped. And then he heard himself lamely talking. Something he had to do, some work to get through. Excuses. Good-nights. She stared after him curiously as he hurried away.

HE stopped by the murmuring fountain. In the soft moonlight he leaned over the edge, burying his chin in his hands, stared at the tumbling cascade of water. From the house the strains of gay music had resumed.

Probably she was dancing now with David. In the mist of the fountain Nat could see her, see her as she had looked a moment ago. He closed his eyes, and he still saw her. Oh, there was no doubt about it. He was falling in love with her.

He raised his head, lighted a cigarette, took a turn about the fountain. She was not for him. He repeated this to himself—"Not for me." Then he threw the cigarette down, stamped on it. The dance-music stopped.

He leaned against the fountain again. He waited for the gay music to begin again. But it did not. In a moment, however, he lifted his head swiftly. Ruth had begun to play! He stared up at her dark window, waited tensely.

It was a love-song she was playing, soft and languorous, particularly appropriate for such a night—and yet disquieting to Nat in his present mood. The bow did not falter, and the music continued, beautiful, caressing.

Nat sighed slightly. Again he buried his chin in his hands, stared into the splashing water. Then he heard a soft swishing sound. Before he turned his head he knew, from the perfume, that it was Doris. She came close and leaned against the edge of the fountain, emulating his own posture, turning her face on her hands, to smile, half-mockingly, at him.

"Isn't it lovely?" she said softly. "The—the night—and that heavenly music?"

Nat looked into her eyes.

"Yes—lovely," he said huskily.

The smile left her face and she raised it, looking curiously at him.

"What is the matter?" she whispered.

"Why—why did you rush off like that, awhile ago?"

"Why—I—" he began.

"Nat," she breathed, "what is it? Don't you—like me?"

"Like you?" he echoed. "Of course I do! Why, you're the loveliest, most



Nat lurched toward those curtains; he heard the shot—felt a stabbing pain. He half turned his head; saw Tyler hurl himself into the room. . . . Then darkness engulfed him.

charming—you're—you're grand," he ended lamely.

"But I'm rich, and you're poor—is that it?" she said.

"Something like that," he said, trying to say it lightly.

"Silly," she smiled.

She came close to him, her face raised, lips parted.

"Doris!" he said. "Doris!"

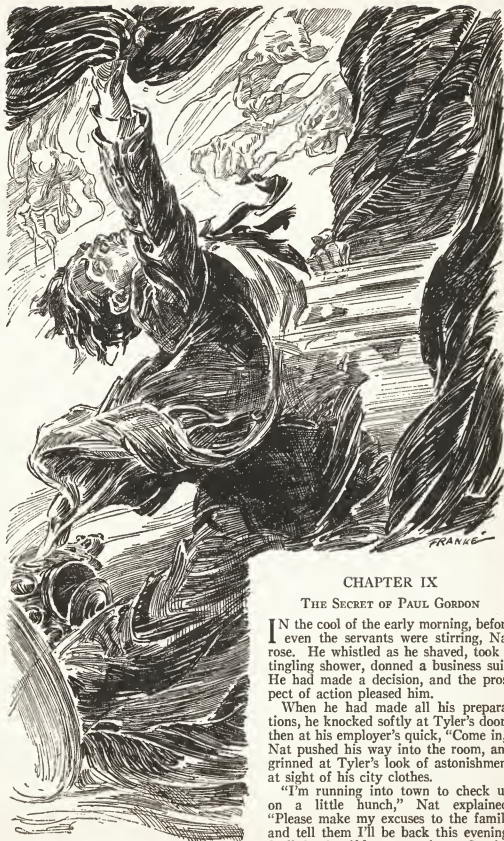
He reached out his arms, felt her in them. Then his lips were on hers. He held her closely and looked down at her

radiant face. "Doris," he whispered, "I love you!"

She smiled up at him.

"Silly," she said again. "Couldn't you see I rather like you?"

Above them, from the dark window of the bungalow, the music swelled clearer. They both raised their heads, listening. A chill clutched at Nat's heart. But the music continued. Warmth replaced the chill, suddenly. The strains of that love-song, uninterrupted, clear, pure, were like a benediction.



CHAPTER IX

THE SECRET OF PAUL GORDON

IN the cool of the early morning, before even the servants were stirring, Nat rose. He whistled as he shaved, took a tingling shower, donned a business suit. He had made a decision, and the prospect of action pleased him.

When he had made all his preparations, he knocked softly at Tyler's door; then at his employer's quick, "Come in," Nat pushed his way into the room, and grinned at Tyler's look of astonishment at sight of his city clothes.

"I'm running into town to check up on a little hunch," Nat explained. "Please make my excuses to the family and tell them I'll be back this evening. Stall Gordon if he gets curious. Say it's a business matter."

Tyler nodded. "And what about my own curiosity?" he smiled. "Is this hunch a secret?"

"Not exactly," said Nat. "It's about the mysterious Mr. Gaudio. I'll want to spend considerable time in the files of one of the newspaper morgues. I suppose you could fix that by a phone-call?"

"Certainly," said Tyler. "I'll give the city editor of the *Star* a ring. He'll give you the freedom of the reference-room."

HE glanced inquiringly at Nat, but did not question him.

"Here's the hunch," said Nat: "It may be all wet, but I think it's worth riding. The mention of this Gaudio by young Gordon means something. And the fact that your friend Crandall, who's by way of being a walking encyclopedia on crime and criminals, has never heard of him, or at least doesn't recall the name, means even more."

"It may be the key to the whole business," Tyler agreed.

"Well, my hunch is this," Nat said: "Gaudio belongs to Gordon's past, that peculiar past which seems to extend back only to 1916. If my hunch is right, Gaudio, for some reason, God knows what, wants to do away with Gordon. It must be a mighty powerful reason to have lasted all these years. The Gordons know that reason, all right, but they're darned well determined that no one else shall."

Tyler nodded, interested.

"If Gordon were a different sort of man," Nat continued, "I'd say his extreme secrecy was pretty good evidence he had something shady to hide. Possibly a criminal record—and an underworld feud growing out of that. But if I'm any judge of character, Paul Gordon didn't come from the underworld. There's breeding in the man—and integrity."

"Right," Tyler agreed. "He's a gentleman."

"But I do believe, from what little the Gordons let out before they were on guard, that Gaudio is actually the man behind this underworld threat they fear." Nat resumed. "What I *don't* believe for a minute, is that this threat is the result of Gordon's campaign against gangsters. That's a red herring. Why they should draw it across *our* trail, I don't know. That's what I hope to find out."

"That's all very well," said Tyler. "But how do you propose—"

"I propose to search the files *before* 1916 for the name Gaudio," Nat interrupted. "Paying particular attention to Chicago news stories. And to *pictures*. It's my hunch that the Gordons were involved somehow with a man named Gaudio, probably in Chicago, and almost surely before 1916."

He paused and then added, significantly:

"And here's the point: A man of Gordon's present wealth and power could cope with any *known* enemy, unless that enemy has something on him. We don't think Gordon is that kind of man. Therefore the *present* identity of that enemy, who must be Gaudio, is *not* known to Gordon. Because if he were, Gordon would have him behind the bars in short order. That can only mean that the man who was called Gaudio, who was known to the Gordons as Gaudio, is now no longer known under that name. And whatever identity he has since assumed, is not known to the Gordons."

"I believe you've hit it!" Tyler exclaimed. "The Gordons think Gaudio is the mind behind their peril. And yet they can't lay hands on him. Because he has covered his tracks so well! So, in effect, he is actually an *unknown* enemy. Which makes their problem mighty tough."

"Right," agreed Nat. "Gaudio has changed his name and identity, and unless I'm very much mistaken, the Gordons have changed *theirs*. But Gaudio has the particular advantage of knowing their secret, while they simply don't know his. They are tangible targets while he—is just a shadow."

ONLY a single window in the great house was lighted as Nat turned the car at the entrance of the estate and came to a stop to wait for Cooke to open the gate. With satisfaction he saw that it was Gordon's window.

"Cooke turned a powerful flash-light on him from the security of the lodge, and Nat grinned reassuringly and identified himself. Cooke called a greeting to him, and the gate swung open.

As Nat swung around the house, he saw that the lights in the living-room of the cottage were on. Tyler was waiting for him. Nat put the car away. As he came out of the garage, he heard the music for the first time.

Ruth was up in her dark room, playing. He stopped, gazed at the window. She was playing softly, serenely. And

yet his spine tingled, as it always did, probably as it always would, at the sound.

Tyler sprang to his feet eagerly, as Nat entered the cottage. His eyes went to the manila folder under Nat's arm.

"I've got it," Nat said quietly.

TYLER curbed his curiosity as Nat hung up his hat, then going to the phone, called Gordon's private number. Gordon himself answered.

"This is Benson," Nat said. "There's something of the utmost importance. We must see you at once. . . . No, no, it has nothing to do with the music. . . . What? No, it would be better if you came here. . . . Yes. *Alone*, please. . . . Thank you. We'll be expecting you."

He hung up and returned Tyler's questioning glance. "If you don't mind waiting just a minute?" Nat said.

Tyler nodded. Above them, Ruth still played softly, another song now. Nat raised an inquiring look toward the sound.

"She's been playing for ten minutes or more," Tyler said. "No interruption, though. I think the music soothes her."

The two men fell silent, waiting. Presently they heard Gordon at the door. Tyler admitted him. He had replaced his dinner jacket with a black velvet smoking-coat.

The man sat down, after a searching look at Nat's face. Nat paced up and down as he began to talk, hardly glancing at Gordon. Tyler, however, never took his eyes from the man's curiously inexpressive features.

"I've spent the whole day and evening in the files of the New York *Star's* morgue," Nat began. "I was looking for one Gaudio. I found him."

Tyler, watching Gordon, saw no change in the man's countenance.

"I just had a hunch," Nat went on. "And that hunch was that I might find that name in news-stories out of Chicago—some time before 1916. . . . I did."

He turned and looked squarely at Gordon for the first time. There was a flicker of the man's eyes, no more. The face was a mask. He did not even nod for Nat to continue. He just waited. Nat resumed his pacing.

"Joe Gaudio," he said, "was convicted in the year of 1915, in the city of Chicago, together with his brother Vito, and their father Tony, of the crime of kidnaping. The victim was an eight-

year-old boy, the son of a wealthy resident of the city, James Moridon."

He stopped and again looked at Gordon. The man was looking straight ahead, as if not seeing. Nat, standing quiet now, facing Gordon, resumed:

"The Gaudios demanded one hundred thousand dollars' ransom, and threatened death to the boy if the police were notified. James Moridon *did*, however, notify the police; but he made very sure that this did not leak out. He left the ransom money, unmarked, at the spot designated by the kidnapers. Detectives watched, with orders to follow whoever came for the money, but to make no move until the boy was safely returned.

"After forty-eight hours a man did come for the money, and they trailed him. The boy was returned safely. And next day the three Gaudios were arrested. Shortly after their conviction, which was speedy, the three men, with the aid of underworld friends, made a spectacular jail break. In the fight which followed this, Tony Gaudio and his son Vito were killed. Joe Gaudio escaped."

GORDON, who had been sitting stiffly on the edge of his chair, now sank back and passed a hand over his face.

"Within a week," Nat continued, "the house of James Moridon was bombed. His wife was killed. Moridon himself, his son and his baby daughter, were miraculously uninjured. Moridon, nearly frantic with grief, posted a reward of one hundred thousand dollars for the capture of Joe Gaudio. The country was ransacked. He was not found. Within another week, despite a heavy police guard, Moridon was twice shot at through the windows of his home. Then an attempt was made to kill his son. The very next day James Moridon, his son and his infant daughter disappeared."

He paused and picked up the manila envelope from the table.

"I have had copies made of pictures which appeared with the news-stories," he went on. He took these from the envelope and handed them to Gordon. Tyler bent forward to look at them too. Gordon stared at them dully.

"This one," Nat said, placing his finger on one of the copies, "is a picture of Joe Gaudio. This is the kidnaped boy. And this—is James Moridon."

Tyler peered at the pictures. Gaudio, as far as he knew, he had never seen.

The picture of the kidnaped boy revealed an eager-faced, smiling lad. It was the third picture, that of James Moridon, which brought a startled exclamation to his lips:

"Why, that picture is the image of your son, Mr. Gordon, as he is today!"

Gordon nodded slowly, his head still bent over the pictures. Then he raised his eyes to Nat's. Bitter grief and pain shown from them, shone all the more because of the complete lack of emotion in his face.

"I am James Moridon," he said. "My son David was the boy who was kidnaped."

Tyler stared at the picture of James Moridon, and then at the man he had known as Gordon. It was certainly not the same face. Gordon, observing the puzzlement in his eyes, gave a little sigh.

"I was in the war," he said slowly. "I—I was badly wounded. My—my face was horribly mutilated. What you see now—is the result of plastic surgery."

Nat gave a sudden exclamation.

"Of course! Now I understand! That was the one thing missing!"

Gordon sank back and regarded them from eyes which seemed suddenly sunken, without luster. He threw out his hands, then, with a quick gesture.

"I—I've kept this a secret," he said heavily. "From everyone but David—and my wife. Because I *knew* that as long as Joe Gaudio lived, none of us were ever to be safe—from the shadow of death. That if ever it became known that I was James Moridon, this man would search me out—and kill me—or worse, my children or my wife! You don't know the power of hate in that Sicilian's soul."

Tyler's face was filled with compassion as he turned to the man.

"I begin to understand," he said.

THE music of the violin overhead which had been so soft, so caressing, now rose, suddenly, for an instant, and then, on a discord which was like a cry, it stopped. The eyes of the three men jerked upward, staring.

Nat and Tyler sprang to their feet, started for the stairs. From above they heard a sound of hurrying steps. At the top of the stairs the blind girl appeared, the violin dangling in her hand, her face deathly white.

Nat ran to her as she swayed.

"Hélène!" she gasped. "*Hélène!*"

Gordon, who had sat as if frozen, rose, trembling.

"Good God!" he cried.

"Go to her—quickly," Ruth said, hoarsely. "She—she's in terrible danger!"

She gripped the banisters, held herself erect.

"Go!" she commanded. "I'm all right!"

Nat whirled about, took the steps in a bound. As he flung himself out the door, he heard the other men following. Across the moonswept lawn he raced, his eyes going to the house. A light burned on the second floor.

Hélène's room was dark. Reaching a spot under her window, not delaying to go around through door and stairs and halls, he sprang upward, hands clutching for the edge of the balcony. They caught, and he pulled himself up, vaulted the rail, pushed forward toward the open French windows, making no effort at silence, intent only on getting to the girl's side, oblivious of possible danger to himself.

AS he came up to the window, he heard a sound from within, of some one stirring. There was a click, and the reading-lamp by the girl's bed came on, revealing her frightened face turned toward him, and beyond her, a sudden movement of heavy curtains. As he stared, a small black pistol appeared from between the folds of the curtains.

"Hélène!" he shouted at the top of his voice. Then he was lunging through the windows into the room. As he lurched toward those curtains, toward the spot where he had seen that black pistol, there flashed through his mind the astonishing fact that his invasion of the room had not set off the burglar-alarms. . . . He heard the shot, and at the same time felt a searing, stabbing pain. He clawed at the curtains, tried to hold himself erect.

He heard Hélène scream terribly, half turned his head, saw Tyler hurl himself into the room. Then the curtains gave way, and Nat plunged sidewise, through an open door, went down, clutching at his breast. The last thing he saw was Doris, framed in the open doorway across the room, her eyes wide. Then darkness engulfed him.

This unique and gripping story of an incomprehensible power comes to a thrilling climax in the next, the August, issue.

The Sportsman's Scrapbook

By Ewing Walker

VIII—Big Bets



THE late Arnold Rothstein and Jimmy the Greek made several good-sized wagers; but centuries earlier their prototypes set marks to shoot at.

Col. Henry Mellish moved high, wide and handsome. Once he lost £40,000—which is to say about \$200,000—on one cast of the dice. But it didn't faze the Colonel; he was inured to such experiences. On another occasion, at one sitting at cards, he lost \$485,000. Leaving the gambling-club, he met the Duke of Sussex, who advised him to try his luck again. The Colonel did, promptly winning \$500,000 from the solicitous Duke.

Old General Scott was a man who knew his whist—knew it so well and played it so astutely that he won \$1,000,000 at it alone. The Duke of Portland also won \$1,000,000 at whist.

Naturally, they didn't all win. Lord Sefton tossed away \$1,000,000 at Crockford's alone, and young Mr. Harvey of Chigwell had the unique experience of winning and losing at the same time. In the year of grace and high wagers 1780, young Harvey essayed to take on one O'Birne, an Irish professional gambler. When Mr. O'Birne was through with Mr. Harvey, Mr. Harvey owed Mr. O'Birne the arresting sum of \$900,000. Harvey offered to give up his estate to discharge the debt. But O'Birne refused to let the other sacrifice his all, agreeing to retain but \$50,000 of his winnings and to roll the dice for the remaining \$850,000. The dice were rolled; O'Birne lost.

A nobleman, visiting Crockford's—like White's, a notorious gambling-place—found himself broke. An obliging waiter loaned him a modest sum. With it, the nobleman won \$400,000.

In Australia the biggest stake in the history of gambling was played for, yet at the time neither winner nor loser thought he was playing for more than an inconsequential sum. Here's the tale: A young Englishman was standing in the doorway of his hut, far back in the hinterland. Two uncouth strangers approached and asked permission to spend the night. Supper done with, one of the strangers proposed a game of cards. Soon the host had won what cash they had.

Then one of the visitors said to the other, "Bill, where's that bit of paper we got up-country? Perhaps he'll play us for that." The "bit of paper" was the deed to some plots of land up-country. None thought the document of any value. The Englishman won it; and eventually it brought him five million dollars, for on the ground was developed one of the richest mines in Australia. Properly enough, he sought out the two men from whom he had won the "bit of paper," and provided for them handsomely.

The ladies gambled too. One of high rank lost \$3,500,000—though some kindly friends placed it as low as one million. The losses of the pulchritudinous Duchess of Devonshire amounted to \$880,000.

In the old days, hazard was to some a costly game. Sir John Bland at one sitting lost \$160,000 while the blithe statesman, Charles James Fox, after playing for twenty-two consecutive hours, rose a loser to the extent of \$55,000.

Charles James, by the way, lost often and much. By the time he was twenty-five, he was financially ruined, his father having, on top of the son's own losses, paid out the equivalent of \$700,000 for him. At one race-meeting he fared better, winning \$250,000, yet in the end his friends raised among themselves \$350,000 to pay his debts and buy him an annuity.

Back in 1809, Capt. Barclay walked 1000 miles in 1000 successive hours (that covers about forty-two days!) at the rate of a mile in each and every hour. On the event, \$500,000 changed hands, the Captain himself winning \$80,000.

Gawdy Brampton's losses are still proving disturbing. First, he lost all his money; then he proceeded to lose his estate of Blo' Norton Hall. Finally, he hanged himself in an attic of the place, from which his ghost is said still to issue. Maybe because his widow married the man who won his money.

The Shadow of

By SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

BILL ESTABROOK was angry, for he felt there surely was some connection between W'i Ying's sending his "cousin" to do the cooking, and the fact that one of Bill's old bronzes was missing. There was six long feet of Estabrook,—the university catalogue has it: "*Estabrook, William Martin; B. A. Leland Stanford; M. A. Peking; Jamison Professor of Oriental Arts,*"—and he liked his food almost as much as he did the treasures in ancient metals.

Breakfast had been vile, lunch worse; and now he sat waiting for W'i Chang to leave the apartment, high above San Francisco's Chinatown, so that he himself might go out and have one decent meal. So Bill sat facing a window, hat on, the edge of his chair, thinking how damnably empty he was, and wondering what could have happened to the bronze bowl. He already knew that pieces of bronze had been stolen from several curio-shops in the Oriental district; but if a thief wanted something really worthwhile, why hadn't he taken more than one from Bill's collection? Or taken one of the finer specimens?

The police had been immediately informed about the missing bronze bowl. Bill's friends, having read the story in the early editions, had only reminded him that he had plenty more dust-catchers in the apartment.

Estabrook wished that the youngish Chinese would hurry. Before the Asiatic left, Bill intended to order him to leave the keys he had obtained from W'i Ying. It didn't occur to Bill that the old servant would permit anyone untrustworthy to take his place while he enjoyed a week's drunk: Bill was merely taking no chance that another and finer bronze might walk away.

Just as Estabrook was about to call to the substitute cook, the apartment-bell rang; Bill noticed that W'i Chang

shuffled to the door in soft house-shoes, which added none to his vanishing store of good humor.

The man who was shown into the room by the Chinese was about Bill's age; the visitor saw Estabrook sprawled in a chair, hat near by, and asked, voice low: "Where's Pansy?"

Bill blinked. "I don't get you."

The reporter glanced about the room. The last slantwise rays of the sun came through the southwest windows; eastward, Chinatown was already in deep shadow, the tiled roofs blended into the more severe outlines of neighboring Occidental buildings. Light gleamed on a *l'ien* box on a table, brightening the bronze which once contained the rice paste and carmine and kohl to make an empress more beautiful. The metal top of the *l'ien* had an elaborate scroll ornament in worn gold against a salmon-red ground; needle-engraved in the middle was a bird with widespread wings, all delicate greens and blues.

Around the room were other pieces of the Estabrook collection, started by Bill's grandfather. A lamp-stand with dragons biting furiously at the stem. A gilded wine-bowl. Many mirrors, some of silvery alloy, others dimmed with a rough greenish incrustation due to burial. On a teakwood stand was a huge jar, with ogre-masks and leering eyes carved into the metal. In a corner were Bill's beloved ornaments of warfare: the pomel of a dagger with open goldwork; a pair of axle-caps such as Marco Polo probably saw; a bronze sword with intaglio inscription to a forgotten god; halberd blades; copper ax-heads; *ch'i ling*, those star-shaped ornaments for banners, with bits of turquoise long since disintegrated.

"What a lot of junk!" the reporter said. "Willie Estabrook—Professor of Art! I'll bet he comes dancin' into the

the Wind

A fascinating Chinatown drama, by the gifted author of "Three Rich Men" and "Sword and Candle."

room with a silk handkerchief in one hand and a nosegay of flowers in the other. . . . What's Willie doin', anyhow? Puttin' perfume behind his ears before he gives us tough newspaper men an interview?"

Bill Estabrook said shortly:

"How'd you like a good poke on the nose?"

"What for?" The reporter stared at Bill's bulk, and then casually selected a cigarette from a box on the center-table. "Did you think you had this yarn exclusive? Say, what sheet're you on? New man out here? Well, take it from me, you go around offerin' to slap schnozzles, and you'll last quick, kid."

"The name," Bill growled, "is Estabrook. I may dance on the greensward, but I buy my own cigarettes."

The reporter's cheeks flushed. He drew in smoke deeply, and then said: "Sorry. I thought you were just another lousy reporter. Don't take it to



And now the old Chinese was dead. . . . Until W'i Ying was avenged, the sacred ring of white jade could not be put on the thin old finger.



A Tiger highbinder fired, and one of the gleaming headlights disappeared.

heart. We always have nicknames for —er—personages."

"And mine's Pansy?"

"You've got me over a barrel," the reporter admitted. "If you want to paddle, phone my city editor and tell him Robertson's here, full of politeness. Men are fired for a lot less, these days."

Bill rubbed his chin. If he hadn't been so confounded empty, he supposed he'd be liking the fellow. He said soberly: "Forget it. Now, what d'you want?"

"How much do you know about bronzes?"

Estabrook didn't say, "When the Victoria and Albert Museum people are in doubt they ask me." He said: "A little."

Picking up a dish, Robertson said: "What's this?"

"A *fu*. The usual heirloom type of sacrificial vessel. The shape's common, but the patina is remarkably good. You seldom see dark green streaked with Prussian blue, and the square dragon ornament is interesting. I found it in the hill country, the time I was shot in the shoulder. . . . What'd you say?"

"Nothing. Why?"

Bill said sharply, "Had an idea I heard somebody say something." He raised his voice: "*Ho la! W'i Chang!*"

Silence. . . .

The apartment high above Chinatown seemed suddenly dark, and very still. The warm hues of priceless bronze, when the sun vanished, became black, the color of death.

"*W'i Chang!*" Estabrook shouted. "*T'ng ni kong ha!* And hurry up!"

"Maybe he's beat it."

"Had on his house-shoes," grunted Bill. "I told the pup to leave me his keys." He added, "Be right back," and got up from his chair swiftly. He was really angry now.

The kitchen door was shut; Estabrook pushed it and found that it didn't open; he banged against it once before seeing that a piece of wood had been wedged against the bottom, between door and sill.

He called again, "*W'i Chang!*" and then cried: "Robertson! Come here!"

THE reporter was grinning. "Swell servant you've got," he said. "What d'you do now? Go around and open up the back way?"

Estabrook said grimly, "Watch!" He smashed into the swinging door; the wedge held, but the upper spring gave, and the door crashed to the floor.

"Empty," Robertson said curiously. He thought: "This boy's tough. I'd hate to mix with him."

"Is it?" asked Bill. "Look at the door, man!"

Together they lifted the door from the prone figure of the Chinese "boy," as it fell, it had been hurled over the servant.

It was the reporter who spoke first, suddenly.

"He's dead!"

"Knifed."

"Who did it? Why? What's it mean?"

Bill muttered: "Don't know."

"Tong war?"

"Every time a man's killed in Chinatown, everybody bleats, 'Tong war,'" Estabrook said. "Chances are that some hard-up binder heard how much my real servant had paid this substitute, and went after him for a couple of dollars."

BILL bent, reached inside the boy's jacket, and pulled out a silk charm-bag. He released the draw-string. Money all there. Three five-dollar bills; a twenty in gold. A little carved image, which should have been the tiger-symbol of the W'i tong, but wasn't. Estabrook stared at the tiny figurine, a demoniac god, paunched, with wind-blown robe—the wind-god, symbol of the Mong Yu tong.

Bill said: "This fellow wasn't a cousin of my servant at all. He belongs to a rival tong."

Robertson whipped out pencil and pad.

"Know how old he was, Mr. Estabrook? How do you spell his name? And—"

"You know as much about him as I," Bill said, standing up. "All I know is that he's been murdered, and I suppose I've got to call the police."

Robertson nodded; then he suggested: "I could call my office, and they'll get in touch with Headquarters."

Bill shrugged, not caring.

He stood staring down at the dead Chinese, trying to piece matters together. It didn't fit. W'i Ying had many times sent a "cousin" to do the work in the apartment. Just the same, the wily old Oriental would never send up a member of a rival tong, would never pay money to an enemy. It wasn't done.

He was standing in the kitchen when Robertson returned.

"We're all wrong sometimes, Mr. Estabrook," the reporter said slowly. "And I've stumbled over a story, thanks to my comin' here. It's tong war, well enough. I've got it written down. A Chinaman's

body's been found down on the waterfront, and he was murdered too; so—"

"Two dead Chinamen make a tong war?"

"Not exactly. But the other Chink is a member of the—wait a minute—W'i family."

"W'i Ying?"

"Yep. Old Chinaman."

Estabrook said: "The devil!"

"Was he?"

"No. Didn't mean that. He was a fine old fellow. With me in China." Bill forgot that the other was a reporter. "Where does the stealing of bronzes fit in with this business?"

"I was just going to ask you that, Mr. Estabrook."

"The stolen pieces aren't much good," said Bill. "Common. Moderns, except mine. Covered dishes, imitation *ch'in*, bad examples of urns, uninteresting plaques. All for the tourist trade. The last one stolen— Hold on; we're getting somewhere! It was a copy of a good piece. The original's in the Tuan-fang collection. Carved with a tiger. The linear ornaments on the jaws, shoulders and sides is characteristically of *ch'in* period. Called the Tiger bronze."

"That's the emblem of the W'i family, isn't it? The Tiger tong?"

"Right. And the bronze which was stolen from me is called the Shadow of the Wind. Pretty close to the wind-god. The wind-god's the symbol of the Mong Yu tong, and they've been at outs more than once."

"All of which means what?"

"Just what I've said," Bill told him.

"Out of the stolen bronzes, there's one emblematic of the W'i family, and one of the Mong Yu family. The W'i symbol is a tiger; the Mong Yu tong have the wind-god."

"Which makes me Queen of the May."

SLOWLY Bill said: "W'i Ying was my friend, old man. I'd like to help you, but it doesn't seem to make sense."

"And if you can't even guess what's caused it, the Chinatown squad'll run around in rings." Mournfully: "Here I have an exclusive yarn handed me on a platter, and when I tell the desk, 'Another tong war,' I'll get the laugh."

"When you know the Chinese as well as I do," Bill said quietly, "you'll about give up looking for reasons. Once in a while you fall over the truth, but not often. Let's go in the other room and wait for the police."

"Told my office I'd telephone 'em again," Robertson said. "With developments—which I haven't got."

Bill was a long way off when the reporter again helped himself to a cigarette: he was in the Chinese hills with W'i Ying; they were crouched about a fire, like a red eye in blackness, half frozen, each with a gun pointed across the flames, in opposite directions, waiting bandit attack. . . . He was on the Chinese plain, W'i Ying tasting each mouthful of food prepared by villagers who hated the white devils. . . . And now the old Chinese was dead. Why?

"Before we get done," Robertson said, "we may have a real story."

"Somebody else killed?"

"Not yet, but soon, unless my city editor's bump of guesswork has gone west. And he can tell to a finger how many drinks you've had. It seems that while I've been insultin' you up here, Mr. Estabrook, a Chinaman's escaped from the Point. A hatchet-man who was in for murder—mixed up in a tong war between the Tigers and the Wind-god gang. He's been watched ever since being sent up." They didn't even let him have visitors, for fear his tong would bring drugs, or a knife. Bad boy."

"Mong Yu Yü was a Number One highbinder," Estabrook agreed.

"Well, he's out. He got away."

"At four o'clock?" Bill asked curiously.

"How'd you know? Heard about it already?"

"No. Four is the Hour of the Wind, a propitious time, according to the Mong Yu tong. I've heard of Yü; he's doubly bad because he ought to know better. He's a scholar, third class, and therefore can read anything."

"He didn't do any readin' in the pen. The prison authorities don't let Chinese get papers, because they can't censor 'em. Even local sheets aren't supposed to get inside, although they do. But foreign-language papers aren't allowed. All of which is very instructive; but how about the dead man in the kitchen? I'd like a break before the cops come."

BILL didn't hear the last words. He was thinking: "The bronze I had was inscribed. I've got a photograph of it somewhere." Then he went to his desk, and began going over a sheaf of pictures until he found a photograph of the vanished bronze. With Robertson listening, he translated the characters:

*"Though a hundred dark walls stand
sentinel,
And the rage of a hundred armed guards,
Yet will I dare to come to the lonely
pine-tree
On the tenth day at the sacred hour
And become cloaked, for I shall see
The Shadow of the Wind."*

ROBERTSON said softly: "Only one tree on the reservation, Mr. Estabrook. Up behind the warden's residence. Maybe it's a pine. Look here; the man did escape at four, and the warden held out on the story, hoping it was only a hide-out. The dope's this: Yü was missed at lock-up. He's supposed to have obtained a white jacket from a mess-hall con, and the guards between-gates thought he was one of the privileged houseboys at the warden's, so he got outside without a pass."

"His tong brothers told him to keep watching," Bill decided. "They had to get word to him about the escape, and did it by attracting his, or the prison's, attention to the series of thefts of bronzes in Chinatown—ending with the theft of the wind-god bronze from me, which gave Yü the plan."

"And now he's been smuggled on a tramp sailing for China, and he's already outside the Heads. The bulls'll be wireless, and cable Honolulu, but they won't see Yü. Now, getting back to—"

"They'll see Yü," said Bill grimly. "But not until he's had a try at evening up the score with the W'i family. A Tiger hatchet-man testified at his trial. If Yü has run away, after all this work in getting him out of prison, I'll throw my collection into the bay. Let the police have all the tips they want; the lowest coolie knows that Yü will square accounts. The Tiger tong realize this, and started killing by knifing the man in my kitchen, who killed poor W'i Ying and came here in his place to steal the wind-god bronze."

"If you know so much about it, where's the escaped con hiding now?"

"I can tell you where he isn't," Bill retorted, "and that's either on a ship or in Chinatown. He'll return at the hour he escaped from prison. Four o'clock—in the morning. If the W'i family and the Tigers are strong enough, they'll be waiting for him. If not, he'll sneak in unmolested."

"Only the cops will be ready, and Joe Robertson will have an exclusive story."

"You'll say nothing," Bill Estabrook said softly. "Not until four. Then you

can telephone the police. You're forgettin' that W'i Ying was my friend."

"This isn't China, man!"

"I realize that," said Bill coldly.

"And how about these Tigers putting the cops wise?"

"Breach of etiquette which would set every other tong on their necks. The testimony at the trial was bad enough, and was done by a 'binder who refused to follow precedent—probably being in deadly fear of Yü—and who was consequently shipped back to China in disgrace." Estabrook paused, and then said: "Don't let the police in on the truth, please. You see, the W'i family will feel that W'i Ying has not been properly avenged unless a brother has a hand in the actual capture of a Mong Yu tong-man—"

"So you'll line up with the Tigers?"

Bill said: "If you knew the places W'i Ying has been with me, and how he cared for me, you'd see that I've got to do this thing myself."

As the bell rang loudly, Bill added: "That'll be the police. Let's go out the back way."

"And leave 'em sweatin' here?"

"I'm hungry," said Estabrook. "Let them wait."

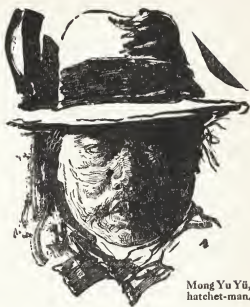
AT five minutes to four in the morning, fog had slithered over the oily surface of the bay and into the sleeping city, to curl dragonlike about the tiled roofs of Chinatown. Gangrenous light came from the street lanterns in yellow and green; every shop shutter was up, every door bolted. An old litchi-nut-vendor huddled in a basement stairway, his tattered black rags protecting him little in the Dead Hour of the Shadow of the Wind.

In a high room the nasal voice of a flower-girl rose in weary, simulated ecstasy; the sound took Estabrook a good many thousand miles away, to the morning when, with W'i Ying, he was harried through the gates of a Chinese city. Cold, fog, remembrance, made his right leg throb. That was where the slug had torn its path that time. . . .

And now W'i Ying was dead.

The matter, to Bill, was plain enough:

Mong Yu Yü, hatchet-man, had been convicted of murder by the testimony of a W'i of the Tiger tong. Yü had been sent to the penitentiary at San Quentin. It was necessary for his fellow-tong-men to determine how to get news to him. With the bronze wind-god bowl in mind,



Mong Yu Yü,
hatchet-man.

a series of robberies were consummated, to attract Yü's attention. Then it became needful to obtain Estabrook's bronze. In some way old W'i Ying was murdered, which added a killing to the Mong Yu's count as well; and W'i Chang—really a Yu—stole the bronze.

Why "W'i Chang" didn't merely steal the wind-god bronze and depart, Bill didn't see, unless the tong-man had been ordered to remain and see what happened, what Bill did about it, or if Estabrook suspected the Mong Yu.

The W'i family learned of the death of W'i Ying, and sent hatchet-men to take immediate vengeance. Therefore the substitute servant was knifed. Since it would have been against custom to rob him—a dead servant's money belongs to his master, according to practice—in Bill's house, the man's silken charm-bag was untouched, which gave Estabrook his first clue to the entire affair.

Now Mong Yu Yü was out of jail. The one chance that the Mong Yu took was that their scholarly hatchet-man mightn't know the inscription on the ancient bronze called the Shadow of the Wind. This seemed impossible to Bill; Yü would be filled with lore concerning the symbol of the tong, and undoubtedly knew the words.

Yü would know where to go—to the pine tree. He would know what to expect; in one Chinese district Bill had heard an automobile called the Shadow of the Wind. And so the escape was worked. By the time the warden admitted to the newspapers, and to the

sheriff of the county, that a Chinese had actually escaped, Mong Yu Yü would be safe across the bay, and in hiding.

When the clapper of the great bell of the cathedral on the southerly boundary of the Oriental district hammered four times against the side, Bill was concealed in a deep doorway, next to the headquarters of the Mong Yu society. Estabrook was out of sight of the church, but the gilded letters seemed visible:

*"Son, Observe the Time,
And Fly from Evil"*

And Bill wondered if he'd ever learn to do that very thing. He thought of the reporter's sneering opinion of a collector of bronzes, of a college professor of Oriental arts, and wondered what the man would say if he realized that in the twenty minutes or so before the police could arrive, the chances were about a million to one against Estabrook's success—and the continuation of his life.

Before the hum of the strokes had died away, as if smothered in fog, dim black-clad hatchet-men appeared as if from nowhere, to conceal themselves at vantage-points on the opposite side of the street. Whether or not they were seen by the Mong Yu, awaiting the return of Yü himself, Bill could not be positive, although he thought that he heard the click of an opened window above him, and the indrawn hiss of cursing anger.

Were the 'binders Tiger hatchet-men, or only Wind-god *bo' how dov*, prepared with an ambush in case the W'i family sought to attack here and now? The muffled curse made Bill pretty sure that they were Tigers.

BILL understood the customs governing revenge, tong warfare. Would vengeful men be guided by any regulations? The Tiger tong were ready for trouble. The men worshipping the god of the wind would gladly give it to them. Would the W'i family be willing to hold their fire until Bill had a chance to talk and act?

It was his servant, his friend, his—his more than brother, who had been killed.

Bill was entirely without fear. He seemed a long way from the States; he might have been in any Chinese city. Only the years he had spent abroad motivated him in this necessity to provide happiness for his dead friend's soul. Until W'i Ying was made content, avenged, the sacred ring of white jade could not be put on the thin old dead finger. . . .

Estabrook heard the sucking noise of tires on wet pavement. Pale headlights gleamed suddenly down the street, and then the spot on the approaching machine cut through the fog, investigating, prying, searching each doorway near the Mong Yu tong house. Bill crouched out of line; he supposed every Tiger hatchet-man was doing the selfsame thing.

The automobile, creeping ahead, swung diagonally nearer the Mong Yu place, and the beam of the spotlight swerved to the opposite side. Some one in the car must have seen something; the spot steadied, and the first shot roared in the black street.

ONE high scream followed the discharge, a shriek which ran the gamut from pain to fear, and ended in a whining prayer involving the First Tiger, son of the greatest star of the Tiger constellation. Hard on it came the shouts of the infuriated W'i family, who dared not storm the car without being mercilessly cut down. Mong Yu hatchet-men flung open windows high above the street, and answered the cries of rage with gleeful taunts, knowing that they had the upper hand, and that under protection of the blazing lights their men could remain in the car or, covered by the rifle-armed 'binders above, make a sudden and unexpected—and safe—attack.

A Tiger highbinder fired from a doorway, and one of the gleaming headlights disappeared with a clatter of glass.

Estabrook could wait no longer. If the other lights were shot out, the battle would really begin, with odds to neither side, in desperate and deadly earnest. He realized what the authorities would have to say about his failure to give the exact time of the conflict, which bothered him less than the fact that his own part would be taken from him.

In a voice which matched his size, Bill bellowed: "*N'hai ngo ke jan ch'i lok loi lo! . . . Stop shooting!*"

Light from the spot revealed him to everyone in the street, a tall white man, standing very straight. Some one in the car screamed: "The cowardly Tigers have again gone to the police to escape vengeance!"

In fluent Cantonese Estabrook said: "You should know me; since when have I been connected with the Gray House?"

"He is the collector of bronzes," a jeering Mong Yu cried. "He is here to ask us to return something worth a few pieces of gold."

Bill said curtly: "I am here for what is mine."

"We will send you the price of the bronze in the morning, O white man!"

ESTABROOK'S heart was beating faster as he said soberly: "And the price of my vengeance?"

An old man high in the building raised a shrill outcry.

"What is this talk of white men demanding revenge? Brothers, wait no longer! If you do, the police will be here. Shoot until no Tiger violates another regulation—until none live to spit at us."

"W'i Ying is dead," Bill snapped. "He was my servant and my brother. I am here. Where is the man who killed W'i Ying?"

There was dead silence.

Then the ancient in the Mong Yu house demanded: "Since when are white men admitted to a tong?"

"I said I was W'i Ying's brother. We had starved together, and we were wet with the pledge of blood. Now where is the man who murdered W'i Ying?"

Estabrook's intention was simple. At exactly four, Robertson would telephone to the police. At that dead hour of morning, it would take a few minutes before a squad could be sent into Chinatown—ten minutes or so. The rival tongs would be willing to watch a hand-to-hand combat, and while watching, men from the Hall of Justice would surround and capture them, a magnificent haul of hatchet-men. But if action were too long delayed, the riot-car would come swerving over the wet streets before Estabrook had accomplished his own purpose—catching the murderer of faithful old W'i Ying. That the police might come too late never occurred to Bill at all. Nor did he consider that the Mong Yu hatchet-man might be too much for him. On his part, he understood how Cantonese fought; it was to his advantage that whoever confronted him would never realize this fact. The highbinder would draw a gun from his sleeve, or if it were already out, wave it twice about his head, and then prepare to fire.

The tremulous old voice gave the order of the Mong Yu tong:

"The white man wants vengeance! He has a right to demand it. Therefore, O Mong Leung, distant cousin, show yourself!"

A highbinder slouched out of the machine; Bill couldn't get a good look at

him in the dimness and fog. No sooner was the *bo' how doy's* foot on the wet street than Bill rushed at him. The hatchet-man's gun roared instantly in the ill-aimed but rapid hip-shot of the Manchus—the big Oriental was not Cantonese at all. And then white man and yellow were rolling in the street.

The crash of the gun, the wet street, had spoiled the white man's blow to the 'binder's jaw; he was lucky to come to grips at all with the other. Instinctively the hatchet-man dropped his gun,—although he might easily have discharged it into Estabrook's body,—and went for his knife.

Bill grabbed the knife-hand, but the nails of the Manchu's other claw began raking at Estabrook's face; the Manchu's teeth closed in Bill's shoulder, snarling, chewing, tearing.

IT was a good fight! Mong Yu tong-men leaned far out of the windows, shrieking encouragement. The spotlight was turned on the two men. Somewhere in Chinatown, far away, a whistle blew; a patrolman had heard the shot, and was pounding down a steep street after having sounded the alarm.

A good fight. On one hand a Manchu killer, a paid assassin; on the other a grim white man, attempting to do two things—capture one murderer, and see to it that a second, an escaped convict, was caught before he could start a new career of terror in Chinatown . . . A good fight—the Manchu released the shoulder, and bit at the hand holding his own. Bill had a glimpse of the face of the 'binder; what would happen if the Manchu got his knife-hand free, the white man could well enough guess. Inch by inch, between the locked bodies, the hatchet-man was working his free hand toward Estabrook's throat, while all the time he tore savagely at Bill's hand.

This would never do. Bill wondered, for one instant, what was keeping the police; this was the time they ought to arrive. He made up his mind as to what to do, since to remain as he was meant only death. Sick with pain, he wrenched his hand from the Manchu's teeth. At the same moment, even while the blade was in the air, Bill put everything he had in one short blow, squarely into the Manchu's belly. The big 'binder grunted; his blade missed; and Estabrook, squirming, was away and to his knees.

His next smash, a sharp uppercut, was

coldly delivered. The Manchu's head snapped back, and Bill slowly stood up.

Where were the police?

THE old Mong Yu sage called down bitterly: "Take his knife and kill him, white man, and thus secure your revenge."

Bill controlled his voice:

"How much is he worth to you?"

"Nothing," the old man called back. "He has lost face. Now kill him, and go away. There is serious business about to be concluded here!"

Estabrook felt, rather than saw, the ring of spectators fade into darkness. In minutes more, guns would be searching out every doorway. There was only one thing he could do, to keep infuriated men apart,—the Mong Yu tong doubly enraged because the rival hatchet-men had seen the downfall of their highbinder Mong Leung,—and that was to talk!

If only he had told Robertson to have

the police within reach—though it would have spoiled everything, for some spy assuredly would have announced their presence. Nevertheless Estabrook was willing to try. He said soberly:

"I have had what revenge I wish. Mong Leung is now my man. There remains the matter of Mong Yu Yü—"

"What do you know of him?" shrill voices demanded.

Bill said: "He escaped from prison. He can return to prison now, alone, and will not suffer because of it. Otherwise"—placidly—"he will not only die in jail, but he will be buried there, and his body will be burned."

"*Ni mo k'un lai tak.* How do you know Mong Yu Yü is here?"

Bill snapped: "You have just told me. Listen: he returned for revenge. In a doorway a man has been shot—a man of the family of W'i. Who was it? Do not lie. I heard him scream."

A thin wailing voice admitted: "W'i Kung has gone to his ancestors in the dragon car—"

"And," Bill continued, "it was W'i Kung who gave the evidence at the trial? Then it is all simple! Mong Yu Yü has had his revenge. He will swear by the shadow of the wind to return to jail, thereby acquiring credit from the authorities. I have had my revenge, and will be satisfied. W'i Ying has been given vengeance through me, his brother."

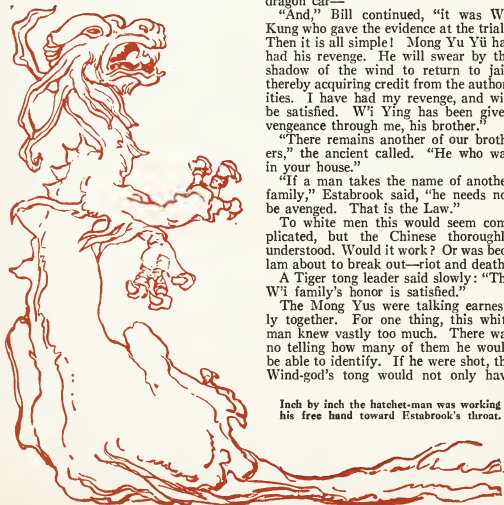
"There remains another of our brothers," the ancient called. "He who was in your house."

"If a man takes the name of another family," Estabrook said, "he needs not be avenged. That is the Law."

To white men this would seem complicated, but the Chinese thoroughly understood. Would it work? Or was bedlam about to break out—riot and death?

A Tiger tong leader said slowly: "The W'i family's honor is satisfied."

The Mong Yus were talking earnestly together. For one thing, this white man knew vastly too much. There was no telling how many of them he would be able to identify. If he were shot, the Wind-god's tong would not only have



Inch by inch the hatchet-man was working his free hand toward Estabrook's throat.

the Tigers to contend with, but the white police as well. So their head said: "The dog W'i Kung, who gave evidence, has howled his last. We are content with that. . . . Will you swear by your father and your grandfather and your hope of heaven that if Mong Yu Yü returns to prison, he will be considered a man of merit?"

"I swear," Estabrook said, wondering if he had enough pull to see it done. Surely a prisoner, voluntarily returning, ought to be given decent treatment. A word to the proper person ought to make matters easier for Yü. "I swear," Bill repeated. He stopped, and then said sharply: "Listen!"

First the Chinese heard the near pounding of one pair of feet; hard on

this, more distant, but coming closer each instant, they recognized the wail of a siren. Here and there men whispered together, and then the automobile's engine was started, and it swung around, away from the direction of the Hall of Justice. In another moment Bill, and the black-clad Manchu trying to crawl away, were the only evidence of what had been in the street.

The bell struck the quarter-hour, the one long stroke ending in a golden moan. Before the sweet echo died in the fog, a patrolman panted up. His flashlight snapped up to Bill's bloody face, down to the crawling highbinder, and then winked out.



"What happened?" the officer demanded. "Try t' hold you up, sir? I heard the shot—"

The patrolman's words came jerkily, louder, as the siren's scream thundered in the narrow streets of Chinatown.

"How'd ye get in the alarm?" the officer shouted.

Bill thought suddenly: "This Mong Leung can't possibly be convicted of murdering W'i Ying. No evidence, not a scrap, except what I know. Better to have him jailed for robbery. Get ten years, probably." Aloud, he said: "I was walking along, and he jumped me, Officer."

THEN the riot car swung into the slippery street, brakes screaming, wheels slithering on the fog-wet cobbles; a half-dozen plain-clothes-men were all over Estabrook at once. Where was the escaped con? Had he attacked Bill? They'd had a tip that Mong Yu Yü was going in a machine toward the Peninsula at four o'clock, and when Robertson phoned they insisted upon talking to him before coming to Chinatown.

It was all very jumbled. Bill said slowly: "As Robertson may have told you, I came down here to avert trouble, and perhaps get back a stolen piece of bronze. The man on the street went for me."

"Tooth and nail," the sergeant in charge remarked.

"Exactly."

"Well, where's the escaped con?" the sergeant went on. "From what this damn' newspaper man told me, we expected to find riot and sudden death here, instead of just a plain stick-up. And in the meantime Yü's beaten it away—"

Robertson was attempting to catch Bill's eye; Estabrook, seeing the signal, said quietly: "Beaten it away, yes. I'm sorry, Sergeant. I really did the best I could—"

"Then he was here?"

Bill grinned. "It was quite a party while it lasted."

"I'd advise you to talk, sir."

Robertson said: "O'Malley's a good egg, Mr. Estabrook. He'll keep quiet until I make an edition."

"Yü is on his way back to San Quentin," said Estabrook.

"Sure. That's just what escaped cons always do!"

Bill was suddenly tired. "Have it your own way," he said. "Only, Robertson, if

I were you, I'd take a chance and say that Yü has given himself up."

"And be laughed out of a good job?"

"Have it your own way." Bill stared up and down the deserted street, where a few minutes before, hatchet-men had been ready to fly at rival hatchet-men. What was the use of arguing? What difference did it make to him? If W'i Ying really was watching from the Rain-bow Dome, waiting to ascend heaven after being avenged, he at least would be convinced.

While an officer handcuffed the Manchu, the sergeant remarked: "It all sounds pretty windy to me—"

"It's worse than that," grinned Bill.

"It wasn't even the wind. It was just the wind's shadow."

Estabrook and Robertson were walking past the old brick cathedral before the reporter said: "I didn't want O'Malley to think we were holding out on him, Mr. Estabrook. But while the talkin' was goin' on, I noticed a lot of foot-prints, wet soles on dry wood, where the riot-car's lights showed the inside of a doorway. I'll bet it's a real story, with you solvin' something when the dicks were completely up in the air."

"Leave me out of it," Bill told him.

"I'll give you all I know about it, but first I want some coffee and ham and eggs—"

"And get your face dressed where it's torn."

Estabrook said: "That's nothing. Once, when W'i Ying and I were up in the hill country, after a bit of old bronze—"

He didn't finish. Instead, he thought: "I've done everything except to get the wind-god bronze back. It ought to be marked with the symbol of W'i's tong, the tiger, and be placed in his coffin. W'i Ying must sleep in the shadow of the great wall, where the wind never blows, and has no shadow at all."

BUT the missing bronze, almost miraculously, was at Bill's door when he returned, growling over the miserable coffee he had been served in an all-night restaurant. Holding the bronze was a middle-aged Chinese, who bowed when Estabrook arrived.

The Oriental said: "I have been first cook at the hotel for the Very Rich. The tong of the Tiger have sent me here to be your servant."

"Here," said Bill, "there is talk of brothers, not of servants. Now, brother, make me a decent cup of coffee!"

Man Killer

By WILLIAM
J. MAKIN

The author of the famous Wolf of Arabia stories believes that a man will sometimes manifest the characteristics of a certain beast. In this extraordinary detective story he introduces us to a real killer—a lion man.



Illustrated
by Margery
Stocking

"FACES," said Jonathan Lowe, "often tell me too much. Walking the streets of this great city is much more exciting than walking through the jungle. I see wolves, vultures, tigers—the whole of nature, red in tooth and claw. There are men and women with the faces of beasts. Not a pretty sight."

And with an apologetic smile he scratched the head of the blissful white monkey that squatted on the arm of his chair.

"Then you might be interested in this face," I said, flicking over to him an early edition of the newspaper on which I worked. It was still damp from the press, but the picture-page displayed clearly the head of a man whom I pointed out.

"Can you conceive of any face more benevolent, more—er—respectable?" I argued. "There's the face of a man who is much more likely to be preyed upon than to fight for himself. Look at the sad eyes! And the mournful droop of the mouth. A bald head, too."

"A very interesting head," observed

Jonathan Lowe. "What's the fellow done? Won a golf championship or married an actress?"

"Neither," I said slowly. "He discovered the body of a man brutally done to death, a few hours ago."

"Really!" murmured Jonathan Lowe, still scratching the head of his white monkey. "You interest me profoundly, my dear Hayton. Tell me more."

I glanced instinctively at the clock; it was nearly one o'clock in the morning. A newspaper man, and particularly a crime reporter, keeps queer hours. But I was a boarder in a strange household. I was, in fact, the *only* boarder.

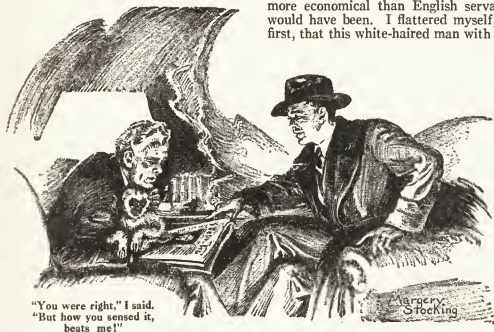
Jonathan Lowe was my landlord. I had discovered him through a discreetly worded advertisement in one of the newspapers, offering a suite of rooms at the top of a rather large house in St. John's Wood. The rent asked was fairly high, but the rooms were excellently furnished, and as I was earning a good salary, I did not hesitate.

Yet I confess that it was the man himself, Jonathan Lowe, who was the real reason for my taking those rooms. It is not every day that one finds a man with white hair, his skin almost the color of mahogany from tropic suns, clothes of a snuff-colored variety, and a pair of penetrating blue eyes, displaying a house in St. John's Wood that was positively unique.

Two servants ran that house, and ran it perfectly. One was an Indian, Abdul Aziz; the other a negro, Milestone. The Indian was the cook, and was able to

cajole me in for meals when my work at the office should have made me dine in town. Milestone, a shambling, smiling son of Africa, had a genius for anticipating wants and inventing little luxuries of existence. Both these men had served

Why had Jonathan Lowe decided to have a boarder in his house? He was possessed of a fairly comfortable pension, and had saved money during his long period in the jungle and bush. His tastes were simple, and the two servants who looked after the house were really more economical than English servants would have been. I flattered myself, at first, that this white-haired man with the



"You were right," I said.
"But how you sensed it,
beats me!"

Jonathan Lowe in the wilds of Africa and India. They served him now in the heart of civilized London.

But of those strange characters, Jonathan Lowe was the strangest. For many years he had been a game-ranger in Uganda, trekking the bush with a rifle under his arm, and keeping such beasts as elephants and lions from raiding the farms of settlers in the districts. Before that he had served as a forest officer in India, wandering the slopes of the Himalayas and living what is one of the loneliest of lives that a white man can experience.

Now he had returned, to settle in St. John's Wood. A huge garden stretched away from the house at the back. At the end of this garden Jonathan Lowe had installed a series of cages in which scrambled and scuttered the beasts that made up his private collection. For he was passionately fond of beasts—he knew their habits, their private lives, even their thoughts. Many a famous zoölogist came to talk of beasts with Jonathan Lowe. The proximity of his house to the Zoo at Regent's Park made it a rendezvous for men as strange and unique as the beasts in his garden.

intense blue eyes was really lonely and wished for company in the spacious house in St. John's Wood. Then came the awful suspicion that perhaps he regarded me as he did those beasts caged at the end of his garden—a subject for study.

But my work as a crime reporter on the *Daily Courier* kept me too busy for speculating upon such subjects. It was my habit, after a night at the office, to drop into his library and chat with him for a few minutes over a glass of port. And invariably I brought back with me the early edition of the paper which would be read by a million or more at breakfast. . . .

"Yes, he discovered the body of a man brutally done to death," I repeated, as the little clock tinkled one and the white monkey blinked at the sound. "The body was that of a middle-aged man, rather scrubby about the chin, and his clothes on the shabby side. He is still unidentified, and likely to remain so for some time."

"Why?" asked Jonathan Lowe.

"Because of the very brutality of the attack," I said. "The head and face was battered beyond recognition. A huge club—one of those athletic things known

as an Indian club—was found lying in the gutter alongside the body.”

“Where was the body found?”

“In a lonely part of Hampstead Heath,” I replied. “I’ve spent a good deal of the evening in the vicinity trying to piece a story together. It’s a dark patch of ground beneath trees. Just the place for a murder. Ugh!” I shivered.

“And the body was discovered by—”

“The fellow whose photograph is staring at you from that page of pictures,” I said. “A nice quiet fellow—been a clerk in a solicitor’s office for twenty years. Lived an ordinary, uneventful life for as long as he can remember, and then—this. I consider it was something of a scoop on my part to get that photograph. He was very reluctant to let me have it. And then, when I did take it to the office, what d’you think the news editor said?”

“I haven’t the faintest idea,” said Lowe.

“He asked me if I couldn’t get a photograph of a girl, instead! ‘This is too damned ordinary,’ he said. ‘Surely there’s a girl in the case, somewhere?’ He went on grumbling, and eventually passed the picture for publication.”

“And isn’t there a woman in the case?” Lowe asked.

“The only woman I know of in this case is the wife of this nice quiet fellow. They live a very quiet suburban life in Golder’s Green. And, oh, yes, there are two little girls, his kiddies. He’s awfully fond of them. I caught a glimpse of them all when he took me home to get me the photograph.”

“It’s a very interesting photograph, too,” murmured Jonathan Lowe.

“D’you really think so?” I asked enthusiastically.

“Why, of course. What is his name?”

“As ordinary as his face, or so the news editor said. It’s Ernest Meek.”

JONATHAN LOWE did not smile. “Ernest Meek, eh?” he repeated.

“I admit that he looks—er—placid,” I said apologetically. “I suppose it is those sad eyes.”

“Green eyes, aren’t they?” asked Jonathan Lowe.

I looked up in surprise.

“How did you know?”

“Just a lucky guess,” he said. He wrinkled his eyes at the photograph. “But isn’t there something strangely familiar about this face to you?”

I stared at him. “I suppose it’s a face

such as one might see in any suburban train any morning,” I said.

Lowe gave a little gesture of irritation.

“Have you been to the Zoo lately, young man?” he asked.

I shook my head. “I’ve been too busy chasing criminals, to bother about a few mangy beasts in their cages,” I retorted.

HE looked at me deprecatingly. “You might find it very profitable to go and study those beasts behind bars,” he murmured. “It’s really quite as interesting as going through Pentonville. But we won’t argue about that. I would only suggest that if you entered the lion-house at the Zoo and stared at one of those beasts lying in the sawdust you would see something resembling *this*!”

And his finger pointed to the photograph in the newspaper.

“By Jove, you’re right,” I chuckled.

“I do recognize the face now: A bored, tired, listless-looking lion, blinking behind bars. A lion! Of course!”

“And a killer,” added Jonathan Lowe quietly.

I sat up with a jerk. Lowe’s mahogany face, creased with lines, had set like an idol. His white hair nearly matched that of the monkey, which now was slumbering peacefully at his shoulder.

“What did you say?” I asked, in a whisper.

“I said that this was the face of a killer,” repeated Jonathan Lowe quietly. “Just as a lion will defend his mate, his cubs, his den from the intruder, and yet to all appearances seem placid,—even bored-looking,—so this man whose face you have pointed out to me is capable of the most dastardly and frightful type of murder.”

I laughed outright. It woke the monkey, who grumbled in a muttering tone.

“Now you’re letting your jungle ideas run away with your common sense,” I protested. “Why, you haven’t even spoken to the man!”

“I don’t need to,” Lowe replied.

“But he couldn’t possibly be the murderer!”

“Why not?”

“He’s not the sort of man to go bashing his victim on the head with an Indian club. It’s highly probable that one of the many Indian students who live at Hampstead may have wandered onto the heath and—”

“I have never seen an Indian use an Indian club,” murmured Lowe. “If you

think I'm exaggerating on this point, ask my cook, Abdul Aziz."

"But the idea is fantastic," I urged. "You might just as well tell me that the policeman who came in response to the cry of Ernest Meek committed the murder."

"Have you a photograph of the policeman?"

"Good heavens, no!"

"Well, even policemen have been known to commit murder," said Jonathan Lowe slyly.

BY this time I was really annoyed. "You can't convince me that Ernest Meek is a murderer," I said angrily. "After all, I've spoken to the man—and after three years as a crime reporter, I ought to know a murderer when I see him."

"In this case you've failed to recognize one."

"Because the fellow somehow reminds you of a lion,—and I admit there is a sort of resemblance,—you want to prove to me that he is a killer! Good heavens, if my news editor thought that I'd talked to a murderer and let him go, he would murder *me* if I ever dared show my face in the office again!"

The pitch of my voice caused Jonathan Lowe to chuckle.

"Now you're suggesting that I ought to prove my fantastic idea, eh?" he said. "Well, it's possible I can. If this man is a lion-man, as I believe he is, then he is sure to behave in a certain way. Now, just what would he do?"

I stared at this white-haired man as, sunk in his chair, he began to brood aloud. His calm, even tone of voice fascinated me.

"The lion, my dear boy, isn't really a great thinking beast. For his size, he has a remarkably small brain. He is rather ashamed of it and you'll find it well at the back of his receding head. I've shot too many not to know. The lion tries to make up in savagery what he lacks in intellect. But nearly all the beasts with better brains can escape the killer when he's hungry."

"Because of this small brain, the lion is really a one-idea'd beast. One idea dominates him. He can show a certain amount of cunning when he is a man-killer, but even then one single idea obsesses him. For example, it is a curious fact that when a lion has killed a man and been deprived of his prey, he hangs about in the neighborhood of the

corpse. A gruesome obsession; yet it has been proved again and again. The beast seems unable to leave his prey. A friend of mine in Africa who was badly mauled by a lion, and was carried by his boys to the nearest outpost, had his stretcher followed by the beast for nearly thirty miles through the bush."

The eyes of Jonathan Lowe, eyes which now reminded me of an alert monkey, lighted up as he came to this point in his musings. He turned abruptly toward me.

"Where is the body?" he asked.

"The body!" I gasped.

"Yes, the body of the unknown man who has been murdered."

"Why, I—er—suppose it's in the local mortuary at Hampstead."

"Then let us go there at once," he urged. "I'll get my car out of the garage, and we'll drive over to Hampstead. It won't take us more than half an hour."

"But it is already after two in the morning," I protested. "I should hate going anywhere near a mortuary at this time. Why should we?"

His hand grasped my arm.

"I might prove my point about this man," he said, nodding at the newspaper which had slipped to the floor. "Moreover, you might get what journalists call 'a good story.'"

"I realize I'm not likely to get much sleep!" I groaned.

Nevertheless, I followed him out of the room in some excitement. If there *was* anything in his theory, it would soon be disclosed; if there wasn't, well, I should soon be back in bed dreaming of a whole Zoo let loose in the city streets.

AS we roared up the hill at Swiss Cottage toward Hampstead in the little "two-seater" car belonging to Jonathan Lowe, the rush of cool night air convinced me that we were behaving like a couple of madmen. The streets were deserted, and the street lamps flung queer shadows across the pavement.

"This is pure madness!" I yelled above the roar of the engine to Jonathan Lowe, crouched at the wheel.

"Of course it is," he yelled back. "But I rather like it."

I touched him on the arm as we drew near to the police-station. He understood, and stopped the car about two hundred yards away. Then we sauntered slowly up the hill. Our footsteps seemed to echo in that quiet street.



"A lion will defend his mate, his cubs, his den, from an intruder."

"The mortuary is in the side street," I whispered.

He nodded.

"Go quietly!" he commanded.

It was almost on tiptoe that we reached the corner of the street. Simultaneously, we both peered into the darkness of that side street. A yellow light gleamed in the station window. I could even see a uniformed policeman writing steadily. And in the side street—nothing. Shadows, queer shadows flung by the lamp. Nothing more.

I was about to chuckle. Jonathan Lowe was wrong, after all. Then I drew in my breath. One of those shadows had moved! Yes, there it was again; there was a figure, a man, lurking in the shadows.

"It's a policeman on his beat," I whispered.

"Is it?" murmured the man at my side. "Let us see."

And with a swift movement, almost catlike in its silent rapidity, he had plunged into that side street. I followed.

The figure in the shadows tried to escape. But it was too late. I heard the stifled cry as we were upon him. And a chill crept to my spine as I recognized the face, that very ordinary face, beneath the yellow lamplight of the street.

"Mr. Meek!" I cried. "What on earth are you doing here at this time of night?"

There was something like a sigh of relief as he recognized me.

"It's you, Mr. Hayton!" he said. "You terrified me, coming out of the darkness like that."

He fumbled in his pocket for a handkerchief, and at the same time removed his hat. I could see in the lamplight that his bald, receding head was bathed in perspiration.

"What are you doing here at this time of night, Mr. Meek?" asked a grave voice at my side, and Lowe thrust his white head forward.

"Well, you—er—see," began Ernest Meek in an agitated manner. "I suppose it does seem—er—curious. But then, you see, nothing like this has ever happened in my life before. It's not every day that one stumbles across the body of a man who has been murdered, is it? No, indeed it isn't! Well, after I'd gone home—to get the photograph, that is, for you, Mr. Hayton—I found I couldn't sleep. No, I couldn't. My nerves were all upset! Mrs. Meek and the children couldn't understand it. I told them I must go out for a walk. And I found myself walking from Golder's Green here—all this way. Strange, isn't it?"

"Not very strange," said Jonathan Lowe quietly.

He was staring at that figure in the shadows. I could see the eyes, the green eyes of Ernest Meek, alive in the darkness. And as he gazed back at Lowe, I saw them burn with hatred. There was a gleam in them suggesting that he was about to leap upon us. A strange shudder shook his body.

But Jonathan Lowe's stare never wavered. The hatred in the green eyes died away and was replaced by a look of terror. Ernest Meek gave a startled gasp; then, before I could stretch out my hand, he had turned on his heel and was running, leaping away from us in the darkness.

Excitement seized me. I turned to go in pursuit. But Lowe's steely grip was on my arm.

"Let him go," he said quietly. "We know his den. In the meantime, d'you think I could get a glimpse of the body that was found on the heath?"

A minute later we entered the police-station. The officer on duty took our cards. I had called at that station before writing my story for the newspaper, so I was known; and I explained that my friend, Mr. Jonathan Lowe, thought he might be able to give a clue as to the identity of the victim.

The officer seemed to think this white-haired man with the sunburned face and snuff-colored clothes looked harmless enough. He agreed to take him into the mortuary. I did not follow him; I preferred to stay within the comforting light of the police-station and analyze the strange actions of Ernest Meek.

IN less than five minutes Lowe was back again.

"I'm afraid it will be a difficult job to identify him," said the officer.

Lowe seemed lost in thought. He scratched his white head in a reflective manner. Then he turned to me.

"When did the last Canadian cattle-boat reach this country?" he asked.

I stared. "How on earth should I know?"

"You're a journalist," he pointed out.

"I'm a crime reporter, not a docks' man," I protested.

"Well," he mused, "if you can find a cattle-ship that arrived here a few days ago from Canada I think you might, by questioning the skipper, discover the name of that poor devil who now lies over there. . . . I'm afraid that's all

the help I can give you. Good night, Officer!"

And with a nod to the astonished policeman, he walked out of the station.

Only once, in that journey back to the strange house in St. John's Wood, did he speak. It was when the lights of Swiss Cottage were at our backs.

"By the way, did you notice if Mrs. Meek had anything in the nature of a Canadian accent?" he asked.

"Yes, by Jove, she had!" I cried excitedly.

"Very interesting," he yawned. "I should follow that up, my dear Hayton. It might explain a lot. But here we are, and I'm going to bed."

"And I'm going after one of the biggest murder-stories of my life," I growled.

ONCE again the little clock tinkled one, and the white monkey Blanco blinked sleepily. With ceremony, Jonathan Lowe poured out a glass of port for me and handed it to me.

"You look tired, my boy," he said.

I nodded. For twenty-four hours I had not slept. Once again I flicked over to him the newspaper, damp from the press. That same photograph of the ordinary-looking Ernest Meek, now generously enlarged, stared from the front page. And a headline announced:

MAN-KILLER ESCAPES!

I noticed the smile on the mahogany-tinted face of Lowe.

"Yes, you were right," I said wearily. "But how you sensed it beats me. After I've slept this off, I'm going to spend two afternoons a week loafing at the Zoo."

Jonathan Lowe still stared at the newspaper.

"So he got away, after all."

I nodded. "Thanks to you! He knew as soon as you spoke in that side street that his secret was discovered. And you let him run away."

"Well, I like to see even a jungle beast get a chance," he murmured. "But he will be caught when he tries to see his family—as he certainly will. . . . Why did he murder that man on Hampstead Heath?"

"There again you were on the right track," I murmured. "The wife was in it, although she didn't know it. Actually the murdered man was her husband—they were married in Canada many years ago, and he'd deserted her. Then he appeared in London, discovered that she had married again and went straight

to the husband to levy blackmail. Evidently he intended to get ugly if his demands were refused, for today a pistol was found close by where his body had been lying. . . . Ernest Meek told his wife nothing about the man from Canada. He merely arranged to meet the fellow on Hampstead Heath, and went there."

"With an Indian club beneath his coat, eh?" asked Jonathan Lowe.

"Yes, he bought it in the city—probably with some idea of self-defense. Of course he had to buy a pair. Getting rid



Before I could stretch out my hand, Meek had turned and was running. "Let him go," said Jonathan Lowe quietly.

remembered a man who'd called and had a talk with the Canadian. The description was that of an ordinary sort of fellow—bald head, and a rather benevolent expression."

"Ernest Meek."

"Exactly. The next evening the Canadian had gone out and not returned. That was when he had kept his appointment with Meek on Hampstead Heath. His few belongings were still in his bedroom. Among them was a photograph of Mrs. Meek, taken some years ago, as well as a bundle of letters and the copy of a marriage-certificate. Of course, the case was obvious after that."

"And now it is all over," Lowe yawned.

"Ernest Meek is still at large!" I said.

He smiled. "A man with that kind of face can lose himself in a crowd as easily as a lion can lose himself in the long grass. . . . Anyhow, I hope your news editor was pleased."

"Pleased!" I cried. "Why, I've given them the best scoop of the year, and they're just purring!"

And with a satisfied sigh I drained my glass and climbed the stairs to bed.

of the other club was a problem. We found it hidden in the solicitor's office where he worked. But the really conclusive evidence was when we discovered the identity of the murdered man. What, by the way, gave you the idea that he had just come over on a Canadian cattle-steamer?"

"The smell," Lowe replied. "It clings to the poor devil's clothes. You can't work on a cattle-steamer for about ten days without the whole of your clothes reeking of cattle. That particular odor puzzled me for some time. Then I recollected watching a herd of Canadian cattle being landed in this country. And I recalled that same smell."

I nodded my appreciation.

"Well, we were able to trace the fellow as having arrived on the *Calgary Transport* only four days ago. Then we traced him to his hotel, a cheap place in the Euston Road. There a porter



"Is that all, Mr. Martin?" "No. When that muddle-headed maniac comes in, you send him to my office."

MR. ANGUS MARTIN, president of Martin Motors, Oakmore agency for the Whizzer Six, pursed his thin lips and uttered a number of irritated chirks. As he read the letter in his hand, his reddish caterpillar brows crawled to a new low for the year. At the same time, he vengefully pushed the buzzer-button on his desk.

In answer to this summons, the office door suddenly opened and a blonde "permanent" thrust itself within.

"Good morning, Mr. Martin!"

"Not in the automobile business," muttered the president.

"Something wrong, Mr. Martin?" asked the secretary solicitously.

"Oh, no," said Martin dryly, "not a thing." He gestured sardonically. "Only that I'm employing a crew of optimistic lunatics to sell automobiles."

The permanent poised in respectful abeyance. Martin went on:

"I want you to call the shop foreman," he said. "See if a custom-built convertible coupé arrived from the factory last night. Then look up the file on that model and get me the salesman's name, along with the amount of deposit on the order."

"O-kay, Mr. Martin," nasaed the secretary, murmuring as she disappeared: "Gee! The boss is burnin' this morning. Somebody's salesman's gonna get a toastin'."

Drawn by the morbid fascination that causes men to reread traffic tags and "rubber" checks, Martin's eyes reluctantly returned to the letter on his desk. For the second time he read:

"I regret that I am compelled to can-

A Thief

The joyous saga of a salesman who sold not wisely but too well, and became the unhappy mahout of a white elephant.

cel my order for the custom-built Whizzer Six convertible coupé. Unforeseen circumstances, however, make the purchase of such a car unwarranted at this time—"

Martin's gaze held mournfully to this last line. He grimaced and looked up only when distracted by the reentry of the blonde permanent.

"Well?" he questioned irascibly.

"The shop foreman says that car came in this morning and that it's been wheeled onto the showroom floor," reported the secretary. "But the file on it doesn't seem to list any deposit—"

"No deposit!"

Martin clutched the clothing nearest his heart and lunged to his feet. His face bore an expression of mingled horror and unbelief.

"The salesman!" he demanded hoarsely. "Who's the salesman?"

"Mr. Wangle signed the—"

"Wangle!" exploded Martin, collapsing in his chair. "That blundering idiot?"

"Yes, sir."

The president's neck flushed and swelled visibly. His right hand fumbled at his throat. A rending sound hailed the parting of the ways for his collar and studs.

"I might have known that fool's name would be connected with this mess," he raged. "He's had this agency in more fool messes than a psychiatrist could find in a lunatic asylum. Well, I've had enough of it! I don't care if he is the best salesman we've got. He's through!"

Martin paused for breath and glared defiantly at his secretary. She sidled toward the door.

"Is that all, Mr. Martin?"

"No, it's not all. It isn't even the beginning. Furthermore, when that muddle-headed maniac comes in, you send him hot-foot up to my office. Meanwhile,

in Hand

By M. BOWMAN
HOWELL

Illustrated by Henry Thiede

"I'll think of a thing or two I want to say to him."

"Yes, Mr. Martin!" she tinkled. . . .

Mr. Phil Wangle (known as "Super") strolled into the Whizzer Six agency an indolent half hour late. There was a placid smile of content on his smooth, guileless face as he firmly butted his way through the group of salesmen in the center of the showroom floor. Calmly he usurped a favored position alongside the Whizzer convertible coupé that was the center of attraction. To protests he returned an indignant snort.

"I sold it, didn't I?" he demanded. "Why shouldn't I have a seat in the front row for a look-see?"

He glared challengingly about him, awaiting an answer to this poser. But none was offered. So, delivering himself of another snort, Super turned his attention to the automobile at his side.

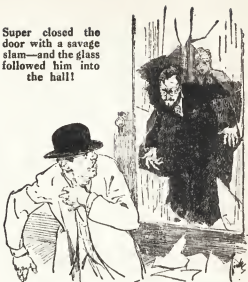
He peered curiously into the driver's compartment and experimentally fingered the numerous devices on the dashboard. As he did so, the frown of petulance on his forehead was displaced by a look of puzzled intent. His hand hesitated over one of the buttons at his finger-tips.

"I wonder," he murmured to himself, "what this one's for?"

SUPER might have asked one of the salesmen at his back. His peacock pomposity, however, refused any such loss of face. He preferred the method of direct experiment.

Super pushed the button. There followed a *whirr-r-r* from beneath the hood of the Whizzer. Without further warning the convertible top, it seemed, suddenly collapsed. Actually the top disappeared into a compartment behind the seat. At the same time, the door-glass frames dropped toward smaller compartments in the doors themselves.

Super closed the door with a savage slam—and the glass followed him into the hall!



Too late, Super attempted a retreat from his position half in and half out of the car. A glass-frame caught him just over the third vertebra, holding his head and pinioning his arms within the driver's compartment. It attempted to fulfill its disappearing function in Super's neck.

Super's screech of anguish rent the air. Four salesmen chorused a belated warning-cry of "Look out!" The glass-frame growled and chewed into that third vertebra.

Super groped frantically for the button he had just pushed. His frenzied fingers found a whole row of them. He yanked desperately at the first he touched. It was the starter control!

The Whizzer responded with a series of convulsive jerks which threatened to dislocate Super's neck—and which, incidentally, he screamed it was indeed doing.

In brief outline form the ensuing action was:

A. Whizzer moved spasmodically across salesroom floor.

B. Salesmen scattered.

C. Whizzer stopped by sill of show window.

D. Crash!—with tinkle and screech obligato.

(Topic "D" would be the bumper of the Whizzer going through the twelve-by-fifteen-foot glass window. The tinkle and screech obligato indicate the sounds of broken glass and broken Super respectfully.)

For a moment, the spectators of this catastrophe were stunned into a vocal and mental inertia. Cries, pleading for

assistance, ascended from the coupé. Suddenly, from the balcony of the show-room, a voice cut the air.

"Here!" it shouted. "What the devil's going on down there?"

The tableau below was galvanized into action. Salesmen jumped to the rescue of the stricken Super. Others turned startled faces upward toward the speaker. They recognized—despite the violent magenta hue of his complexion—Mr. Angus Martin.

THE president's attitude was that of a berserk dervish about to run amok at a Christian revival meeting. His one hand flourished a letter as the dervish might have brandished a sword. He roared choleric repetition of his demand, while taking in the scene of destruction below.

"I say, what the devil's going on down there?"

"It's breaking my neck!" screeched an informative and familiar voice from the coupé.

Recognition of the voice struck Martin like a blow between the eyes. He staggered, wavered apoplectically on his feet. Recovering, his blood-pressure bounced to heights that would have fascinated scientists.

"Wangle!" he volcanoed. "I knew it! If there was a switch on the peak of Mount Everest for starting earthquakes that ass in lion's skin would manage to turn it on. Somebody—anybody—get him out of there!"

But Super already was "out of there." He stood beside the coupé in red-faced indignation. Its broken steering-wheel collared his neck—a neck bloody but unbowed.

"Ass!" he exclaimed, ears wagging with resentment as he looked around. "Who said that? I'll have him fired if it's the last thing I do."

A roar from the balcony effectually dampered this threat.

"You've already done the last thing you're going to do around here! As far as this agency's concerned you're as through as two-wheel brakes." Martin turned and stamped toward his office. "And if we never sell another car until *you* do it, it'll be a pleasure to go out of business!"

Super, at the first blast from above, had looked upward into the face of the president. In that choleric countenance he had read what appeared to his fellow salesmen as the handwriting on the

wall and a few verses from the Book of Revelations. To Super, however, Martin's expression was just so much stuff and nonsense rhyme. He had seen the president erupt before.

"Phoo!" he snorted as Martin disappeared. "The bluffer flees when no man pursueth."

It was something more than an hour later that a redecorated and repaired Super rapped on the door of Martin's office. Following a growled "Come in!" he entered.

A scowling Martin looked up from his desk.

"Well?" he questioned sullenly. There was no reference to Super's recent dismissal.

Nor had Super expected any. He knew, as well as Martin, that he had led the sales-crew for several months. Consequently, Martin would not be eager to have him go. He and Martin, on a previous occasion, had played this same scene. By tacit agreement they would now ignore that episode provoked by boiling blood.

"About that coupé," offered Super placatingly; "you can deduct the damages from my commission on the sale."

For a moment after mention of the coupé, Martin felt the old red corpuscles simmer in his veins. When he spoke, however, his voice dripped verjuice.

"It'll take a magician to deduct anything from that sale," he said, "and I'm only an automobile dealer."

"What d'you mean?"

Martin tossed a letter across the desk.

"I mean it'll take a magician to pull a sales rabbit out of that hat."

SUPER took up the letter indifferently. But he took in the contents like a dose of quinine. A sudden flush colored his neck and jowls. At the same time, his face screwed into something resembling a burned waffle.

"Well, can you imagine that!" he finally fumed.

"I don't have to," said Martin dryly. "Not with three thousand dollars' worth of white elephant downstairs to look at." His scowl deepened as he added: "And no more deposit on it than I'd put up on a block of Insull stock."

"But this customer is one of the wealthiest men in this town," Super protested. "Why, whoever would have thought he'd cancel an order like this?"

"Nobody thought Sam Insull would be eatin' regular in Greek restaurants, ei-

"I say, what the devil's going on down there?" "It's breaking my neck!" screeched a voice from the coupé.



ther," mumbled Martin, "but he's doing it."

Super grimaced. "I guess I was a little optimistic," he admitted ruefully.

"Unfortunately," Martin scathed, "this agency doesn't operate on guesses, at three thousand dollars per guess! And as for optimism, with business the way it is now, a few more blank cartridges like this will make things optimistic in the bankruptcy racket."

"A man's entitled to one mistake," defended Super.

"Not when he's making parachute-jumps or selling custom-built Whizzers." The president leaned forward and shook an emphatic finger at his star salesman. "Look here, Wangle, you're supposed to be one of the best auto salesmen in this town. But if it ever got around that you put this agency in a jam like this, you'd get a horse-laugh that'd stampeade next year's Pendleton Round-up."

Super recoiled; this menace to his pride was an unforeseen predicament. He quaked at the thought of public ridicule.

"The story doesn't have to get around, does it?" he voiced anxiously.

"Not if you sell the car," insinuated Martin.

Super saw the implied threat; he saw, too, the conditional stay of execution. A hurried promise tumbled from his lips as he turned to leave.

"Oh, I'll sell it all right. Just you leave it to me. I'll unload it on the first—"

"And you'll unload it," interrupted Martin, "without any discount—unless, of course, you want to waive your commission."

Super scorned answering this humiliating dictum. He merely cast a resentful glance back across the room. Then, stepping through the door, he closed it with a savage slam—and the door glass followed him into the hall!

FOR a second, Super thought some one had bombed the agency—and he wished some one had, when he opened his eyes on the shattered door. Through that jagged aperture he looked directly into the lava-like face of President Martin. Plainly, another eruption was a matter of split seconds away.

Super fled. . . .



On rubber-jointed legs Super wobbled obedience. "B-be c-careful," he stammered, "that thing mi-might go off."

During the next two weeks, Super devoted every effort to the promised unloading. All he unloaded, however, was a number of prospects who informed him they had enjoyed the demonstration but were not interested. Meanwhile, he writhed beneath the caustic witticisms of his fellow salesmen who, knowing only that something had gone amiss with his sale, had begun referring to him as "the Mahout."

Alone, in charge of the sales floor shortly before the closing hour one night, Super was gratifying his private pout over this appellation with a grumbled soliloquy.

"The Mahout," he muttered. "I suppose they think that's funny. Well, I'll show 'em whether I've got a white elephant on my hands or not! I'll unload that hack if it kills me."

Strangely, this final resolve of Super's was, at that moment, being discussed by two men, less than a block away. They were walking in the direction of the agency, a swarthy, hard-featured pair. As they walked, their pale shifty eyes moved restlessly beneath the brims of

slouch hats. Their conversation was a series of sinister half-snarls.

"Say, Rosetti," the shorter of the two was saying, "what if this salesman gets tough?"

"He won't," said the other tersely.

"But why couldn't we just as easily heist a parked car fer this job?" complained the smaller man.

The man called Rosetti came to a halt. He turned and poked an emphatic finger into his companion's chest.

"Listen, Soupy, we're gettin' paid enough fer this deal to heist a auto show! An' this burg's Big Shot is payin' it because he wants the job done his way—an' what's more, we aint goin' to get the rest o' that dough unless it *is*."

"Oh, I aint squawkin' about takin' a guy fer a ride," grumbled Soupy. "That part's okay. Only I can't figger why he didn't let one of his own mugs pull this tin-whistle job of gettin' the car."

"Listen, stupe, the Big Shot brought us in here because he wants this to be a stric'ly out o' town job. An' if he wants it pulled in a car that aint registered, then you an' me are gonna use

a car that aint registered." The speaker jerked a thumb in the direction of the agency. "This's gonna be a push-over, anyway. All we gotta do is put this guy away in a closet somewheres, roll out the car, an' lock the joint up fer the night."

"Ye're sure this guy's alone?"

"Sure."

The suggestion of a smile lifted a corner of Soupy's mouth. A sudden gleam, like the ones in the bald-headed row of a burlesque theater just before the first chorus, entered his eye. He shrugged debonairly as he released the "safety" on his revolver.

"Y' know," he said cheerfully, "it's fun to watch 'em kick sometimes."

"Ferget it," killjoyed Rosetti. "We aint bumpin' guys fer pleasure this time. This is business. Ye're gonna get us in a jam yet, with that loose finger of y'rs."

"A guy's gotta have some fun," Soupy defended his homicidal propensities.

"Not with me payin' fer it on the end of a rope!" snarled Rosetti. "What's more, while ye're workin' with me, you'll only turn on the heat when I say so."

Soupy shrugged sullenly.

"Ye're the doctor," he grumbled.

"An' if there's any trouble with this case, I'll do the operatin'. You keep that hardware of y'rs outta sight."

"Aw, gee, boss!"

"Quit belly-achin'," growled Rosetti, again moving in the direction of the agency, "an' come on."

SUPER, seated at a sales-desk, was still mumbling to himself when the two stepped suddenly through the agency doors. The scowl on his face underwent a change that would have caused an actor to wince with professional jealousy. He rose to his feet with an ingratiating smile.

"Something I could do for you?" he asked suavely.

"Yeah," announced Rosetti, confirming himself as a prospect, "like to look at one of y'r new models."

Super responded with an enthusiastic pounce on Rosetti's palm. Pumping an introduction, he hastily appraised the prospects' clothing, noting with satisfaction its expensive, if somewhat flashy, appearance.

"You wouldn't," he questioned hopefully, "be interested in a custom-built car?"

"Might."

Super beamed.

"Well, I've got a mighty sweet-looking job over here," he said, turning briskly.

The three men walked across the floor. Like a pair of lean, voracious rats eying a chunk of cream cheese, the two behind watched Super. But the latter, in a high-pressure heat, was babbling a panegyric on the Whizzer Six. (Factory Form Sales Approach 115-A—The salesman and the custom-built car.)

"WE'RE lookin' fer a bus that's already broke in," Rosetti interrupted the flow of adjectives.

Super's ascendant star of hope shot to higher heavens as he indicated the "white elephant."

"Every custom-built Whizzer is broken in at the factory," he plugged.

"What'll she do?"

"Ninety. This baby's got a special motor."

Rosetti tipped a knowing wink at his partner.

"Get-away?" he questioned.

"Rear-end over engine."

"Is she ready to go?"

"You can drive her right out."

"Good," snapped Rosetti, accelerating Super's star of hope to a comet of jubilation. "I'll take her."

He reached a hand inside his coat. As he did so, there was a visible tensing along the ridge of Soupy's jaw.

Super, however, was unaware of this. Awaiting the prospect's production of a check-book, he was momentarily enjoying something akin to an opium-eater's dream. . . . From the seventh plane he stared a full second into the barrel of Rosetti's revolver before realizing what it was.

"Stick 'em up!"

The order was a waste of breath, for with horrified recognition, Super's arms had jack-in-the-boxed skyward. When he found his voice he could find no thought to go with it.

"Woo-oo!" he coughed distinctly.

"Get around behind that car an' lay down!"

Super strangled. His head bobbed frenzied, utter, anything-to-please acquiescence. On rubber-jointed legs he wobbled obedience while skittishly eying the revolver.

"B-be c-careful," he stammered, as he knelt to the floor; "that thing mi-might go off."

"Sure as shootin'," threatened Rosetti grimly, "if you don't can the chatter."

He raised the hammer of the revolver

a fraction. Mathematically speaking, this action multiplied Super's pulse by two, divided his respiration by the same amount, and subtracted a year from his life.

"These fat ones almost always look funny when they're kickin'," prompted Soupy eagerly. That first-chorus-look kindled his eyes. "Let him have it!"

Hop, skip and jump! Hop, skip and jump! Super's hammering heart took up a new rhythm. It settled, however, to a saner pace—knit one, drop one, knit one, drop one—with Rosetti's grated reply:

"Shut up! Quit thinkin' about y'rself an' bundle this guy up."

Soupy shut up, and reluctantly pulled several lengths of cord from his overcoat pocket. With these, in a few moments, he trussed Super into what Rosetti grudgingly admitted to be "a neat package."

"Take him in there an' dump him," Rosetti ordered, indicating a broom-closet at the back of the sales room.

Soupy seized hold of Super's heels. He dragged the latter unceremoniously across the floor, folded him up like a jack-knife, and wedged him into the tiny closet. In a parting gesture, he inverted a mop-bucket over Super's head.

"So long, sucker," he taunted.

But to Super, the words brought more of pleasure than of pain. As the closet door closed, he heaved a sigh of relief into the smothering confinement of the mop-bucket. Presently he actually smiled weakly as his natural optimism disclosed the happy feature of his predicament.

"Anyway," he murmured, "that darn coupé is gone."

But the coupé was not gone.

IN almost instant denial of Super's happy thought, the closet door again opened. The mop-bucket was jerked off from Super's head, and Super was jerked from the closet. He looked whitely into Soupy's scowling countenance.

"Say, mug," Soupy was snarling, "what're you tryin' to do? Pull a fast one on us?"

Super swallowed and sweated. Thrice his mouth opened and shut noiselessly. His head wagged sudden denial that threatened to shake bulging eyes from their sockets.

"Then you better get that crate started in a hurry." Soupy began unloosening Super's bonds. "You oughta be plugged

fer not tellin' us it had a combination on it like a bank vault."

So that was it. They hadn't been able to start the coupé because of the special ignition system. Again Super knew that stay-of-execution feeling.

"It'll start all right," he babbled, tottering toward the coupé. "It'll start—I'll have it going in a second! Don't worry."

"You better do the worryin', if it don't," said Rosetti from the running-board. He grasped Super's arm. "Now get in here an' show us how to run this thing. An' don't make any funny breaks either—see?"

SUPER got in. Rosetti and his henchman took positions on opposite sides of the car. They hung threateningly through the windows, following Super's every move with suspicious eyes. Rosetti hovered a constant menace with his revolver.

"Well, turn it over," he growled.

Super started nervously. His trembling fingers reached for a concealed switch on the steering-column.

"The ignition lock," he ventured explanation. "Here—under this plate."

"Go on," prompted Rosetti, gesturing carelessly with the revolver.

Super already was going on; he was reaching for a button among the row on the dashboard when Rosetti's gesture startled him. His eyes jumped toward the gun. But his numbed fingers continued their fumbling work.

"The starter—" he continued, pushing on a button. . . .

There was a warning *whirr-r-r* from beneath the hood of the Whizzer. The top shot suddenly from view. Simultaneously, two door-glass frames dropped guillotine-like on the necks of Rosetti and Soupy. A shot mingled with cries of anguish.

But Super was not in the car. His mind, at the sound of the first *whir*, had gone blessedly blank. He had left his seat in a single instinctive and sensational leap. He had come down on the turtle-back of the coupé, bumped to the floor, and was now staring in dumb disbelief at his captured captors.

He shook his head. Fogged vision glimpsed shaking fists, flailing the air in futile struggle. Voices bellowed a confusion of threats and curses. Then the threats and curses became pleas for aid and yelps of pain.

"It's chokin' me!" raised the voice of

Soupy with a force that belied the statement.

A strangled "*Arr-r-r*" came from the other side of the coupé.

Super came suddenly to life. In a mad scramble he went over the back of the coupé and snatched Rosetti's revolver from the floor-boards of the car. He bounced the butt on Soupy's head once—just once. Soupy went to sleep.

"Now," panted Super, turning the muzzle on Rosetti, "I'm *It!* Be quiet or I'll tag you too."

Rosetti gurgled and glared. He strangled a reply that iced Super's flush of victory.

"Listen, sap, le' me outta this or I'll have you so filled with holes you won't hold formaldehyde when the undertaker gets y'r body."

Super licked dry lips. "Maybe," he defied waveringly, "but *you* won't do it—because this State gives life-sentences for robbery with a deadly weapon."

Rosetti's eyes widened. His swarthy complexion went saffron. He took a turn at lip-wetting.

"No!" he said unbelievably.

"You'll see," promised Super, reaching for the horn-button of the Whizzer.

"Wait a minute! What're you gonna do?"

"Blow this horn until somebody comes to investigate," informed Super, bearing down on the button.

The horn blared out a steady, insistent call.

"Don't do that!" Rosetti's bark of hoarse haste was a terrified plea. "Listen, buddy, aint there some way we could square this thing?"

FOR a moment Super let up, to snort contemptuous scorn.

"Sure can," he bargained derisively, "—with about thirty-five hundred dollars cash! That is, if you'd like to buy this car."

Again, Super's hand came down on the horn-button. Rosetti's eyes rolled wildly. His voice cracked in frantic appeal.

"Wait a minute! I'll buy the car! I got the dough. Look in my inside coat pocket."

The horn broke off. Super gaped incredulously at his prisoner. His eyes took on a sudden, peculiar gleam. It was the gleam in the eyes of the cat at the rat-hole, the hunter in at the kill, the salesman about to close.

"You mean," he said, "that you've got that much cash on you?"

"Get outta the car an' look fer y'rself. But hurry. This thing's breakin' my neck."

Super rose warily from his seat—and came. He searched Rosetti's pocket—and saw. Hurriedly, he penned a bill of sale—and conquered.

TEN minutes later, a puzzled policeman assisted Super in extricating two sullen customers who, strangely enough, accepted delivery of the car that had held them prisoner. Stranger still, to the policeman, were their parting words to the smiling salesman who saw them off.

"Well, gentlemen," the salesman had said, "you'll never regret that purchase."

The two in the car had turned darkly.

"*We* won't," said one; "but *you* will."

"Aw, nerts," said the other. . . .

Mr. Angus Martin, deep in his cashier's monthly balance sheet, saw red. In particular, his eyes focused on twenty-five hundred dollars, charged against one custom-built convertible coupé. It turned Martin's neck purple.

"That fat-head Wangle's fault," he muttered. "For two cents I'd—"

An interrupting rap on the door lost forever to the study of economics what Martin would do for two cents. There followed, without pause, the haughty entrance of "that fat-head Wangle" in person. He strolled indolently across the room.

"Morning, Martin," he greeted coolly the other's obvious ill temper.

The president glared. He tossed the cashier's report across the desk.

"Look at this and see what's good about it," he barked. "Do you see what your idiotic order got us into? Look at that deficit! I ought to fire you!"

"But you won't," said Super.

"I won't, eh?" roared Martin. "Well, I'll show you whether—"

"No, you won't," interjected Super pompously. "Because I sell 'em."

He tossed the cashier's report, along with a sheaf of cooling green, back on Martin's desk. "The money for that convertible," he explained.

Martin's jaw dropped. He stared stupidly as Super swaggered toward the door.

"But how—" he began suddenly.

Super turned and gestured airily.

"Just a matter," he said, stepping through the door, "of a thief in hand worth a mitful of cush."

The door slammed triumphantly. . . . Its glass followed Super into the hall.

Deep Sea Detective

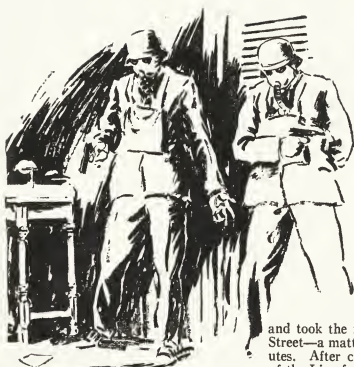
A detective story of an unusual and deeply interesting kind—and also a story of desperate adventure at sea. By the author of the famous stories of the Free Lances in Diplomacy.



CAPTAIN HARDINGE turned out of his bunk at seven and dressed in a leisurely manner. Except for a brief visit to the offices of the Line in Leadenhall Street, the day was his own—and he was getting the full percentage of enjoyment out of his new command and the difference, among other things, in his personal comfort. During this first voyage out and back, as Master, there had been too much on his mind really to savor the difference in status, but now, loading cargo in the great Royal Albert Dock, he was visualizing the difference between a mate's state-room down on the main-deck gangway, in which he had sailed for the Line a good three years, and the really luxurious Master's cabin abaft the wheel-house, where he could entertain half a dozen

guests without crowding—the difference in status between an executive officer attending to details of management, under orders, and a shipmaster whose bare word was law to every human being on board. He stepped out upon the bridge-extension which led to his door for a few glances over his boat and up and down the great dock.

The bulkhead alongside the *Chindwin* was stacked high with light- and heavy-case goods which were being loaded for various Oriental ports; the stacks were covered with tarpaulins to protect them against the weather. In the moving crowds along the bulkheads were Lascars in stained white and red turbans and brilliant-colored cottons, with cheap pea-jackets protecting them against the London chill at that time of year—Chinese



The attacking party trussed up the pirates, searching them for the handcuff-keys.

By
**CLARENCE
HERBERT
NEW**

Illustrated by
J. Fleming Gould

and took the first train in to Fenchurch Street—a matter of some thirty-five minutes. After chatting with the Manager of the Line for an hour, receiving his instructions for the voyage out, Hardinge lunched, made a few purchases, and was back aboard his boat shortly after three.

At four o'clock a well-built, fine-looking man came sauntering along from the inner end of the dock where it joins the wider but shorter Victoria Dock, glancing at the various boats he passed with the eye of one who has spent many years at sea—glancing with puzzled interest, as he finally came alongside the *Chindwin*, at the big stack of heavy-case goods, under tarpaulins, which were being put aboard her. As a number of these were of the same shape and measurement, he unconsciously began counting them—then he went farther aft to where another stack of the same shape were being loaded in through the afterwell hatch to the Number Three Hold. He made a memorandum of the consignee's name—but though the names of some forty different manufacturers were stenciled upon the cases, it seemed obvious they were not the actual shippers.

—Hindus—West African negroes—South Americans. A ray of sunlight painted a ruddy glow upon the sides of a rusty cargo-boat farther up the basin. On the air arose the creaking of blocks, the clatter of donkey-engines—a blended and permeating odor of spices, wines, tobacco, came from the dock warehouses.

Later, as Hardinge sat at breakfast, enjoying the sizzling bacon and eggs and the aroma of perfect coffee, he asked for the chief steward; when he appeared, Hardinge said:

"Henderson, I'm expectin' an old friend an' shipmate down this afternoon—he'll stop for dinner, I fancy. He was mate an' Master in the old Brock Line when I was third. Then he came into money an' a title—settled down ashore—a fine estate in Devon, I've heard. Well, d'ye see, I could take him up to one of the West End hotels in town—but if we could put on something a bit special, here aboard, I fancy he might like to stop."

Feeling satisfied his chief steward wouldn't let him down, Hardinge walked along the bulkhead to Gallion's Station

PUZZLING over what he had noticed, Sir Edward Coffin went up the gang-plank, asked the quartermaster if Captain Hardinge was aboard, and was promptly taken up to the Master's cabin. Owing to the difference in their rat-

ings, the two men hadn't been so very chummy while sailing in the Brock Line until Hardinge had passed for his mate's ticket and Sir Edward had settled down ashore after his stepfather's death. Then they had met a few times in out-ports, and found that they had many interests in common.

"Frank, I rather like the look and feel of your boat. About eight thousand, isn't she? Twin screw? Somewhere round sixteen in good weather—eh?"

"With a knot or two in reserve, if there's any good reason for getting it out of her—enough to offset the fuel cost."

"General cargo, I suppose—Manchester stuff and machinery?"

"Looks like that—from those cases under the tarpaulins. As long as I notice it's being stowed properly, I don't pay much attention to what they're putting aboard until I'm going over the manifest, at sea—"

"I'll bet you did last voyage, though! . . . Had a look-see at every last case that came aboard—eh?"

"Well, it was my first command, d'ye see, an' I didn't know what sort of mate they were giving me. One does get a bit jumpy over his first boat, you know—wants to know everything he can about her. But Jones is a first-chop mate—just going up before the Board for his Master's ticket—so I can leave a good bit to him, this trip."

"What's the idea of all those pianos going out to the Rajah of Bundelcore? Is he running a piano-warehouse?"

"Pianos? Fancy I don't get it! What pianos? An' what have they to do with the Rajah of Bundelcore?"

"That's what I'm asking you. There are sixty-five of them out there under the tarpaulins, and I don't know how many more have been already put aboard—all sorts of different makes—but no shippers' names that I could find."

"The second mate, Davitt, has been in charge of the loading. He'll have the shippers' names, of course!"

SIR EDWARD shook his head. "No, he may not. They'll know at the Leadenhall Street offices—but I don't believe Jones and Alworthy care much whether they're carrying a lot of cargo of the same sort as long as they get their freights. You naturally take aboard what's sent down to you—unless there are suspicious features about some of it which lead you to ask advice. Pardon me for butting-in on what's really none

of my pidgin, old chap. We all of us have different quirks that there's no accounting for. Still—I'm just wondering. Y'see—a Master's job isn't in the least like that of a subordinate officer, because he has the full responsibility loaded onto him. And if something goes wrong—even if no blame actually can be laid against him for it—well—his ticket may be suspended, you know. Quite possibly I used to let that sort of thing bother me more than the average Master does—but I did usually get a line on what might happen, before it happened. Looking back, I can see that it probably saved me a deal of trouble. I can't see how it could do you any harm with the Line if you go up in the morning to see Alworthy and ask him about this damned unusual shipment of pianos. Very likely he'll either give you some explanation or tell you the shipment is all right—but he will know you're looking after your boat pretty closely, and that may do you some good in the long run. Eh? Possibly I'll run down again tomorrow afternoon and hear what he told you."

WHEN Sir Edward reached Fenchurch Street Station about ten, he took a taxi direct to a certain club where he was pretty certain of finding Mr. Francis Yelverton, one of the Lloyd's managers. As it happened, Yelverton was there quietly reading. He surmised that Coffin had probably turned up something which he thought worth going into.

"I say, Yelverton!" Coffin began at once, "what do you know about the Rajah of Bundelcore?"

"Nothing. Name's familiar, though. I've some vague recollection that the man's immensely wealthy—and as balmy upon some matters as most of that lot. Eccentric, you know—plunges on anything that happens to catch his fancy. Makes little difference what it is."

"Have you insured any pianos for him—immediate shipment?"

"Pianos? Wait a bit! Would there be two shipm'nts—fifty or more in each?"

"Just about."

"Aye—we insured one lot for Smith an' Bowers, King William Street, an' the other for Williams an' Downey. Both of 'em firms of purchasin' agents—mostly for the Oriental trade, as I understand it. One lot of fifty-five pianos, assorted makes, underwritten at four thousand pounds—t'other one, forty-eight of 'em, insured at forty-five hundred pounds. Both goin' out on the *Chindwin*, of the

Singapore-Eastern Line. An', now you mention it, I've some recollection that they were consigned to the Rajah of Bundlecore—whoever he is."

"Trying his hand at a bit of trade, do you fancy?"

"Why—I really couldn't say. There's a chap in the club at this moment who'd possibly know. Wait here while I look him up an' ask him." Yelverton returned shortly. "Aye—the Rajah's a Bengali—well over toward the Burmese border. But he spends a deal of time in the Federated States where he has a lot of rubber under cultivation an' a palace that cost him over a million rupees. But—an' I fancy this'll be the milk in the coconut—he was educated at Cambridge an' then went in for music. He's said to be a fairly good pianist, but temperamental—fancies that with just the right instrument, he'd be a great pianist. Well, d'ye see, Whyte didn't know a thing about our end of it—but it would be just like one of those brownies to have a hundred an' three pianos of different sorts sent out to him, so he could try one after the other until he found one that suited him, and then junk the others."

"H-m-m—what do you know about those two firms of purchasing agents, Yelverton?"

"Not a blessed thing! The business was transacted at one of our branches. They paid their premiums—the check apparently went through—or they might have paid in treasury notes—got their policies an' took 'em away with 'em. That's all we know—or really care to know, isn't it?"

"I'm not so sure about that. Eighty-five hundred pounds would be too small a loss to bother you seriously, though it's a healthy idea to avoid it if possible. But what you're carrying on the *Chindwin* might be something else again. I can figure about what that is."

YELVERTON looked startled. "The devil! You don't fancy—"

"I don't fancy anything—until I know a darned sight more than I do now. The *Chindwin* clears Saturday—this is Tuesday. I'll have a chat with Jones and Alworthy, and then look up those purchasing agents. That'll put us in position to speculate on the various angles. I don't know a damned thing about that Bengali Rajah and his pianos beyond the fact that a hundred-and-three of 'em are being shipped to him on my friend Hardinge's boat—and that they're all

uprights—not a solitary grand, that I could see! Of course a lot of grands may have already gone into the holds. Anyhow—I've just got a hunch. There may be some rajah who's fool enough to buy that many pianos just to find one that suited him—but I doubt it. And if they're all new instruments, I'd say they'd be worth about double what they're insured for—if good enough for a first-chop pianist."

Jones & Alworthy, owners of the Singapore-Eastern line, had surmised, upon a previous occasion when Sir Edward had called to see them on business, that there was some connection between him and Lloyd's. So when he called next morning, the junior partner had him shown into the private office at once.

BUT when questioned about the Rajah of Bundlecore, Alworthy said:

"We'd not even noticed that cargo was bein' shipped to such a person, d'ye see, until the Master of the *Chindwin* dropped in, half an hour ago, to ask about this big piano shipm't. Then—one of our clerks recalled the fact that this particular Rajah is a person of considerable wealth an' by way of bein' a rather unusual pianist. Well, with almost any rich Hindu, that would account sufficiently for this piano-shipm't. Why, I know of one Maharajah who has three rooms in his palace filled with every conceivable sort of clocks, gramophones an' wireless sets—all rustin' to bits because, after playin' with 'em until he tired of the game, he forgot he ever bought 'em! Of course Hardinge was doin' quite the proper thing to run up an' inquire about a shipm't as unusual as that—showed him to be a careful an' conscientious Master, d'ye see. But, in the circumstances, we couldn't see anything out of the way in such a shipm't to that sort of brownie."

"Well—the Rajah's taste for music may account for such a piano-shipment—but somehow—Is the passenger-accommodation pretty well booked up?"

"About ninety in the saloon, so far—an' sixty or more in the second class. We usually book a good many durin' the last two days before sailing."

"I say, Mr. Alworthy! Would it be too much of a nuisance to let me glance over the passenger-list?"

"Not in the least, Sir Edward! I'll have the book fetched in at once. I know perfectly well you'd not make such a request without good reason."



There was a fusillade from the Malays in the forward well-deck.

Close scrutiny of the list showed that, up to that moment, eight Malays and four Hindus had booked passage in the saloon, on the *Chindwin*, and fourteen Malays in the second cabin—there being no steerage, as the owners preferred doing without the coolie trade.

"M-m-m—most of these Malay names in the saloon look like shopkeepers from the Dutch Indies—chaps who usually travel on the *Stoomvaart Maatschappij* and other Dutch lines. Of course they may belong in the Federated States, at that. Ever hear about any of 'em? This chap Kroema Salemba, for example? Or Sedikit Ikan? Some of them look to me like aliases with the Oriental idea of humor. 'Sedikit Ikan' would be, literally, 'Little Fish'!"

"Oh, I fancy the names will be right enough. They call a chap after all sorts of things out there. I never heard of this lot before—may be men of substance in Selangor or Perak for all I know. To be sure, there are bad Malays an' good Malays—no gettin' around the fact that the bad ones'll cut your throat for a rupee or a guilder. But we've the bad ones fairly in hand, these days."

From the steamship offices, Coffin went around to look up the two firms of purchasing agents. Smith & Bowers occupied a single medium-sized office on the third floor of a building in King William Street. In it, was a young clerk who also was a typist. He said that neither of the

firm was usually to be seen at the office without an appointment, as they were out about the town, or in other cities, making purchases for shipment to their customers. There was a set of books on the desk, a safe, a smaller desk in one corner, evidently used by the firm. Aside from these and three chairs, there was nothing else in the room. There was no indication that much business was being done—no evidence of any correspondence whatever. The office of Williams & Downey in Lombard Street was very similar to that of the other firm. Apparently the purchasing agents of this type carried on their business with a minimum of overhead expense. The door was locked. On it was a placard saying: "Office hours—10 to 12 and 2 to 4. Inquiries referred to Smith & Bowers, 632 King William Street."

Sir Edward had obtained about all the information he needed—and gave it in detail to Yelverton while they were lunching near the Lloyd's Buildings. When they returned to the manager's office, Yelverton said:

"You seem to have an uncanny instinct for nosing out things, Sir Edward—much to our advantage, as it has proved. What do you imagine the mystery about those pianos may be?"

"Your guess is as good as mine, Yelverton. But I can give you what seem to be the facts as far as the thing has gone. Either the Rajah ordered and paid for those pianos with some scheme of his own in mind—presumably revolutionary—'Orient for the Orientals'—

or some other parties, knowing of his musical twist, are having the pianos shipped with the intention of diverting them somewhere for purposes of their own—and His Highness knows nothing whatever of the shipment. Those twelve Malays and Hindus going out in the *Chindwin's* saloon—with the fourteen in the second class—would indicate the latter supposition, because the Rajah wouldn't need to have anybody at all on the boat. He'd simply take his pianos from the wharf at Penang and float 'em up the little river which goes through his rubber-plantation. We know, now, that there was but one shipment—not two. Smith and Bowers undoubtedly is a one-man firm—that one man is also Williams and Downey. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, nobody would have looked up that point or ascertained the fact. So far, there isn't the slightest evidence of anything illegal. A one-man firm of purchasing agents may do quite a lot of business legitimately if he has capital enough to swing it. You issued a policy and got your premiums—apparently you have nothing to complain about. The pianos were shipped in regular order on the *Chindwin*; Jones and Alworthy issued their bills of lading on them. At destination, their freights are paid or they hold the pianos—which certainly would be good for a darned sight more than the freights. Apparently they have no cause for suspicion or complaint. If the Rajah didn't order the pianos some one else presumably wants them badly enough to pay the freights at Penang, in his name, and cart them off. But there are two points which haven't yet been covered by anything we know: A hundred and three pianos shipped to one man who is not in that business—twenty-six Malays and Hindus that we know about going out on the same boat with that shipment, and possibly a lot more of 'em that we don't know about. Those features are what puzzle me! May be no association at all between 'em, but I'm betting a hundred quid there is—with anybody who wants to take me up!"

"But how are you going to find out? What's your suggestion?"

"WELL, I don't particularly care about a trip out East just now—I had something else in mind," said Coffin slowly. "But this proposition has got me going. You get through to Alworthy on the telephone and ask him to fix me up with one of those cabin-and-bath

suites on the C deck—portholes, not windows—similar suite on the other side of the bulkhead to be occupied by white passengers who won't be trying to get into my cabin. Have him drop a hint to Frank Hardinge that I'm to have the run of the boat—particularly, the radio-house and engine-room; also, that he's to confer with me in any emergency. But don't give Hardinge the impression that I'm superseding him in any way."

FROM the Lloyd's Buildings, Coffin took a taxi to an establishment which specialized in outfitting for every sort of enterprise requiring weapons or equipment. Here the Baronet purchased two dozen bullet-proof vests, thirty automatics and ammunition, two dozen of the latest type gas-masks—and two dozen steel helmets taken from German prisoners during the war. At a house dealing in wireless equipment, he purchased a twelve-tube American receiving-set, a code-transmission-set to work on batteries supplying one kilowatt of power, two sets of head-frames, and two powerful microphones.

Having been assigned to the cabin-accommodation he had requested, Sir Edward then went down to the dock at North Woolwich. Hardinge was in town for the evening entertaining a couple of relatives—but Henderson the chief steward was in charge and recognized Coffin at once. Showing him the letter from Alworthy giving him the run of the boat, Coffin explained that he wished the wireless-sets and batteries stowed under the berth in his cabin for the present—a new Yale lock put on the door at once—and the two heavily reinforced boxes which would come down from the outfitting house in the morning, placed in the trunk-room between-decks.

As the chief engineer, Innes, was aboard, Coffin asked the steward to come below and introduce him—but Innes had seen Sir Edward in Hongkong as Master of the *Argentine Liberator* and was pleased to renew the acquaintance. Upon Coffin's asking if there were two hundred feet of one-inch iron pipe aboard, the chief said he could telephone up to the city and have it delivered by nine o'clock the next morning.

Then, seeing the puzzled expression upon Innes' face, Coffin explained:

"I may be somewhat barmy, old chap—but there are some features connected with this voyage which have made me just suspicious enough to book as far as

Singapore with you to see if anything really does happen. Captain Hardinge is an old pal of mine from the Brock Line—I'd hate to see him in any mess with his first boat. My idea was this: Run that iron pipe around the coaming of the boat-deck from the wireless-house to a point directly over my cabin on C deck—then down through holes in the deck-plating—through one corner of staterooms on A and B decks—through the ceiling of my cabin—painting the piping white as we go to match the room-paint. Run eight rubber-covered copper-wires through it as each length and elbow are connected. By starting to drill those holes at six in the morning, I think we can easily get the job done by tomorrow night—although we've another day for it if necessary. Catch the idea?"

"Weel—I do—an' I do not, sir. I mind ye're makin' a connection from your cabin to the wireless-hoose—but I dinna—"

"Suppose there's some sort of a mix-up—some gang of crooks tie Sparks up or put him out of business so that he can't use his wireless—take possession of his instruments for their own use. They'll think they've settled the question of this boat communicating with any other boat or station. But there happens to be a receiving-set and a transmitting-set too, somewhere below—with batteries. Eh?"

"Oh, mon! . . . 'Tis a grrand idea! An' ye'll be wishin' for me an' ma macheenists to see nothin' an' know nothin' o' what we're aye layin' yon pipin' for! Of coorse—of coorse! Ye've authority, I suppose?"

He was given a glimpse at the owners' letter. It was enough.

SIR EDWARD came down early next morning. Hardinge had been both amazed and pleased when Alworth said the Baronet was booking as far as Singapore—particularly, at the suggestion to confer with him in any emergency—and was most curious to know what it was all about.

"I don't know myself, Frank!" Coffin declared. "That's where the bally old catch comes in. But there's something damned fishy about those pianos—and some of the passengers who are booked with you. That's literally all I know about it—but there's a vague odor in the air. Well—we'll forget about it until something turns up—if it does. I hope you're taking out a nice girl or two for

me to play round with while you're occupied with your professional duties."

One might have supposed from this remark that Coffin would have been looking for pleasant acquaintances among the passengers who lined the rails as the boat steamed slowly down the Thames on Saturday afternoon. But he was concentrating his attention upon the male passengers—particularly on those who were unquestionably Orientals.

Rather to his surprise, eight out of the twelve were men of apparent education. They were dressed quietly in European clothes, and had no appearance of being anything but what they seemed—men of more or less independent means and assured standing in their own communities. The other four were a bit rougher but not offensively so—sufficiently educated for business needs—speaking intelligible English, but talking among themselves in Malay.

IN the second cabin, Sir Edward spotted very quickly the fourteen whose names appeared on the passenger-list. They were the usual smiling lot one sees along the Peninsula and among the Dutch Islands—rather friendly in manner as a rule, but potentially good or bad according to their mood and personal inclinations. There was, however, a feature concerning them which didn't please Sir Edward much—the steamer friendship which they seemed to have started with half a dozen white passengers who spoke very fair English—but who certainly were *not* English. Probably Russian—it was difficult to say. The white races, with some notable exceptions, are seldom noticeably chummy with Orientals on shipboard—and this goes, more or less, even in the case of native princes traveling in the saloon. One is civil and pleasant, of course—plays bridge or chess with them—drinks with them—but doesn't slap them on the back or make up shore-parties to include them. . . .

Coffin is of the type which makes warm friendships without effort. Men and women both sense in him an aura of decency and thorough sportsmanship, which attracts them from the first casual glance. Before the *Chindwin* had passed Margate, he found himself chatting pleasantly with a married couple who knew numerous people and places that he did—and very shortly, there was a group of half a dozen. When the bugle sounded for dinner and they no-

ticed him seated at the Captain's right in the dining-saloon, they learned from the stewards for the first time that he had a title—and were impressed or not according to their own status. Two of the more attractive Malays were seated halfway down at the same table—the other ten were scattered about in different parts of the saloon.

AFTER dinner, Coffin went up to the boat-deck with Hardinge, and found "Sparks" in his wireless-house, inspecting with a good deal of curiosity certain disconnected wires which came up through a pipe under his operating-bench. At first he was disposed to stand upon his authority as a Marconi employee whose official position was more or less independent of the Master—but when Coffin showed him a chief operator's license from the same company and said he had come up for a conference with him, a cheerful grin appeared upon his face. The Baronet went over the features which had seemed to him sufficiently unusual to arouse suspicion and gave his reasons for making certain arrangements in advance which might prove to have been ridiculous at the end of the voyage. As he explained to them:

"I'd rather look like a bally ass, any time, than be sorry I hadn't sense enough to look out for squalls in a dead calm! That iron piping along the deck-coaming looks like any other piping aboard ship—it has no appearance of anything to do with wireless. Even if anyone thought of that, it would be supposed it was some sort of connection with a small dynamo in the engine-room. Tomorrow—while I'm keeping watch outside to see that none of the passengers are up here on the boat-deck—I want you to connect two of those wires to the antennæ and four more to your A and B batteries. I've plenty of Burgess C, below. What power are you putting out from your batteries up here, Walters?"

"Three-quarters of a kilowatt, sir—when it leaves the aërials. We've duplicate batteries—one of 'em always fully charged."

"Not enough, old chap—not near enough! That gives you a range of not over two hundred miles by daylight on any signals coming from west to east—with a possible four hundred after nine in the evening. I'm hoping that we'll soon have a law compelling every passenger-boat at sea to have at least five kilowatts in reserve—dynamo A.C. and

big water-cooled tubes. It'll take space, of course—probably a compartment running to a dozen displacement tons, off the engine-room, somewhere—but it's deadly folly for any boat carrying passengers not to be in constant touch with one side of the ocean or the other. And the receiving-sets are even worse! You've a three-valve set, here, for reception of all your wireless business—which means relaying all the time to other boats—and through a chain of them to the shore. Why, man, I doubt if you can hear any signals three hundred miles in the daytime with that set, even if the coils have a range up to three thousand meters! Eh?"

"Well, no, sir—I can't. With low barometric pressure where I am, and high in the neighborhood of the other boat, I've heard six hundred miles, around midnight—coming from west to east. On the other side—east of my position—it wasn't two hundred at the same time."

COFFIN nodded comprehendingly. "Well, I've a twelve-valve American set, below—shielded grid—which'll bring in two thousand miles by daylight, west to east, and five hundred the other way—midsummer, North Atlantic. I've also battery enough for one kilowatt of power—and I fancied that by coupling yours and mine in series, we'd get rather close to a couple of kilowatts—which ought to give us five hundred miles by daylight under average atmospheric conditions. It's all very well for an operator to put in an alibi that his receiving-set only had an outside range of two hundred miles by daylight—he's probably telling the truth—but his owners have no business sending him to sea with a measly little three-valve set! He should have equipment that's good for something in an emergency—not a child's toy! Take the average D/F station ashore. It's down officially in the Admiralty book as having a range inside two hundred miles—which means half to three-quarters of a kilowatt in power. But every receiving-set I ever owned for radio-phone reception has brought in voices and music two thousand miles at night from a half-kilowatt station. If a radio-phone set can do that, a C.W. for the lower frequencies can do even more with sufficient tube- or valve-power. Even three stages of radio-frequency will do it! However—when you make those connections and I figure out some way of concealing what

I have in my stateroom, we'll be able to get somewhere in an emergency, even if temporarily we can't use this wireless-shack. I don't know what's going to break loose—or when; I don't even know that anything is. But according to my figuring, if it does, it's likely to be in sufficient force to make resistance, at first, merely suicide. My suggestion would be to conceal any guns you may happen to have where you can get 'em in a hurry, somewhere outside of this place, and claim that you haven't any such thing. —That goes for you also, Frank! Don't lose your life trying to defend your boat against too heavy odds—just lay low. Then we'll see what we can work out, when we know what we're up against."

BY the time the boat was standing in past Gibraltar, the little circles of sea-acquaintances were functioning as usual—people of like temperament and tastes drifting naturally together, each passenger finding at least two or three others who were congenial. Some of the Malays were pleasantly accepted by various groups of the whites—joining them in deck or smoking-room games; three of them contributed very good singing and instrumental music as part of the evening entertainments. The passengers most constantly with Sir Edward were the Graysons, an attractive American couple in their early thirties—the Ledyards, Canadians, with a delightful girl of fourteen—two quiet men of leisure who were travelers and big-game hunters. What Coffin especially liked about them was that each of the four men was an athlete who kept himself in top condition and that the whole seven, women included, were thoroughbred sportsmen, ready to take a chance on most anything they hadn't tried before. He was considerably interested in their reaction to Captain Hardinge. All of them liked him, but Cathie Ledyard voiced something more than her own opinion when she said:

"He's very nice—nothing seems to worry him. Seems to me if I were Captain of a big steamer like this, I'd be worrying a bit for fear something might happen to the boat or the people on it. But Captain Hardinge doesn't—he's just sure that everything's all right—all the time!"

Sir Edward smiled.

"Shipmasters are of all kinds, Cathie. Some of them worry too much—some

don't worry enough. But I think you'll find that, in the long run, they know their job and are able to handle it. If they're not—well, they lose their tickets. No Master likes to do that."

COFFIN was beginning to think he had made a serious mistake in having the boxes from the outfitters put below in the trunk-room. He had been figuring upon getting down into the holds from a scrub-closet at the end of a main-deck gangway—but it now occurred to him that if any of the Malays actually got possession of the boat temporarily, there probably would be too many of them in the well-decks and those gangways for any of the officers or crew to get below unobserved. This problem kept running through his mind until he finally thought out a way to remedy the mistake. The cabin and bath which he had selected were directly adjoining similar ones on the other side of the bulkhead, and they could be thrown into a single four-room suite by unbolting a communicating door between the two bathrooms. The other cabin had been occupied by a young Australian couple who were leaving at Port Said. Sending a wireless on ahead to the agents of the Line that the suite had been taken by one of the through passengers who wanted an outside room, Coffin arranged with Coburn the purser to have the two heavy boxes fetched up from the trunk-room as soon as the Australians left, and placed in the cabin they had occupied. When this had been done, Coffin securely bolted the door from the gangway-passage, on the inside—so that it was impossible for anyone to get into the cabin without smashing down the door or cutting through the bulkhead—a very difficult job and one which can't be done in a limited time. When the boxes were secure against any meddling with them—where he had access to them at any moment—he took his radio-sets and batteries into the unoccupied cabin, laid boards on top of the bunks, and connected up his wireless-station so that it was ready for instant use—the remaining pair of wires in the piping being connected to the two microphones which were concealed under Walters' operating-bench in the wireless-house on the boat-deck. With this job completed, Coffin not only could receive and transmit from his own cabin without making a sound on Walters' instruments, but through the microphones he could hear even a rustle of paper in the



"I theenk we talk about heem *now*, sar!"
said the Malay. "Sit down!"

wireless-house above. With the door between the bathrooms locked and bolted, there was no chance for a steward or anybody else to see what was in the unoccupied cabin, and nothing in the appearance of his own room to arouse the slightest suspicion.

At the time of booking their passage, the Malays had expressed a preference for accommodation on the port side and had obtained what they wanted—seven of them being on the B deck and five on the C, directly underneath. As Coffin's cabins were in the more expensive section along the starboard gangway, with none but Europeans or Americans around him, none of the Orientals had the slightest excuse for being on that side of the boat—and they knew enough about Caucasian prejudice to avoid wandering where they were not supposed to go.

By the time the boat was passing Aden at the mouth of the Red Sea, Jones, Henderson, Coburn and even Walters were joking among themselves—occasionally with Captain Hardinge also—over Sir Edward's case of nerves. They were now fairly on the last leg of the voyage and nothing had happened—more than that, there was no indication that anything was going to happen. Innes, however, soberly reminded them that they were crowing too soon. He'd heard quite a lot about Captain Ned Coffin of the Brock Line a few years back—and there'd been nothing in what he'd heard

to indicate that Coffin's nerves were anything but the chilled-steel variety. These six were the only ones aboard who knew anything about Sir Edward's reasons for making the trip with them, or his suspicions concerning some of the passengers. The mate, purser and steward knew nothing of the wireless-piping which had been laid to his cabin. The purser, chief steward and his room-steward were the only ones who knew that two heavy trunks had been fetched up from the hold and put into the vacant cabin next to him. Nobody had the slightest idea as to what was in them. Even his room steward hadn't seen the radio packages or batteries unwrapped, and didn't know what they were—but he had been instructed by the Captain to look after Sir Edward as if he were one of the owners, and had received ten pounds from the Baronet to keep his mouth shut upon anything he happened to see or hear.

AT Colombo, some of the passengers left the boat—and others came aboard, booked to Singapore or ports on the China Sea. Three nights later, the *Chindwin* was S.S.W. from the Nicobar Islands. Sir Edward had gone up to Hardinge's cabin for a chat with him about six-bells, by which time most of the passengers had gone below.

Hardinge was poking fun slyly at his friend.

"We'll make Penang day after tomorrow, old chap—an' unload your bally old pianos. Then I fancy you should stand us a dinner to square-up for your bogey-men!"

"Maybe you'll make Penang day after tomorrow, Frank—*maybe* you will. But I'm by no means banking on it! Way it looks to me, this is just about the psychological time. If the Rajah actually ordered the shipment, perhaps nothing will happen. If he didn't—well, we'll see."

After the Baronet went below, Hardinge lighted his pipe and with a grin on his face was starting to undress—he really thought his old shipmate was developing nerves after settling down ashore where he had no routine dangers to stir him up.

JUST then there came a couple of peremptory knocks upon his door. Annoyed at being disturbed, he called: "Who is it? What do you want?"

The knocking came again—louder.

He strode irritably across the cabin to open the door—and saw one of the Malay passengers standing outside. The man was civil enough, but he wasn't smiling, as the Captain had usually seen him. He said that he wished a word or two upon a matter of importance. Hardinge was contemptuously starting to say it would have to wait until morning—when he suddenly felt an automatic jammed against his stomach. He stepped back in amazement.

"I theenk we talk about heem *now*, sar!" said the Malay. "Go back—other side! Now sit down! Meestar Davitt—your secon' mate, on the bridge—he wass ver' foolish man! He knock down our mans. We wair compel' to shove in the kris to hees belly. He not much good, after—so our mens drop heem ova' side. Quartermaster at wheel no say much when he see pistol' an' knives. We tie heem up. In engine-room, our mans slip down ladders—coom behin' chief engineer in low-down pless—choke an' tie heem before can fight. We fin' Meester Coburn asleep in room—tie-up before can do any'ing. T'e watch on decks we tie up. Some fight—we keel, an' drop ova'board. Your mans in fo'castle we tie up in hammocks w'en asleep. Stewards also."

"In other words, damn you, my boat's in your possession! Well—what do you mean to do with her? You can't get her where she'll not be found when she's

missed! You've killed several men already—and you'll pay for that with your necks when our navy boats catch you! The more you kill, the worse it'll be for you and the sooner you'll be caught! What's the sense of it? You'll not get by with anything of this sort in these days! What about my passengers—what do you propose doing with them while amusing yourselves with my boat?"

"Captain, I theenk you ver' foolish man to spik so insulting at me! If I not always so calm person—so rissonable—I simply cut your t'roat because I not like to hear. But I answer your question mos' plain. We 'ave use for t'is boat as transport—taking many of ouah pipples from one pless to some othair pless. We do not weesh to annoy British Raj too much—so we weel not keel passengers if t'ey kip quiet—not keel of fisar or crews if kip quiet an' do not'ing to interfere. We 'ave handcuff w'ich offisar an' crews mus' wear—an' we kip t'em shut up in lock-plesses. Passenger may go about as usual if kip quiet; steward may go about as usual. But at t'e firrs' sign of rressistance, we shoot—we cut with kris! Our mans rremain on guard everywhere—rready to shoot if anyboddy rressist. We have navigator—two enginemans—two greaser—an' wireless-man—for running sheep."

"But—where are you going to take her? What will you do with the passengers and cargo?"

"Where we take sheep is ouah pidgin. Somewhere up leetle river—out of sight mos' complete. We unload pianos—leave ot'er cargo for ballast. Put passenger an' crews ashore in t'at pless. *Prahus* take all of t'em down coast to some leetle Koninklijke port for few guilder per mans. T'en we take steamer some ot'er pless."

There wasn't anything more to be said. Hardinge's cabin was ransacked for weapons; then he was left there, handcuffed—with the understanding that his meals would be fetched up to him by his own steward. He was given to understand that every room occupied by officers and crew had been searched, and all weapons confiscated.

WHEN the passengers turned out for breakfast, it didn't take them long to discover the serious situation that had developed over night. The four sullen Malays with automatics in their hands—standing where they covered everybody in the saloon—had a most un-

compromising appearance. The different angle of sunlight coming in through the ports showed that the course had been changed to farther south—which those familiar with marine-charts knew would take them along the west coast of Sumatra instead of down through Malacca Strait. The gangways were fairly humming with discussion and protest as the passengers came on deck after breakfast—but the deck-stewards told them grimly that the boat was in the hands of Malay pirates—how many of them, nobody quite knew.

GRAYSON, Ledyard and the two big-game hunters got Sir Edward off against the rail where they couldn't be overheard, and started a conference as to what might be done:

"Dammit all, Coffin—are we going to let a lot of yellow pirates get away with anything like this, and not try to start anything at all?"

"For the moment—yes. If we start anything now, while they've got the upper hand, they'll simply butcher everybody on board—men, women and children. They're quite capable of it if they fancy we've any chance for turning the tables on them. But listen, closely—be damned careful nobody hears a word—and don't repeat what I say to anybody! Understood? Well, then—I suspected something odd about a shipment of a hundred and three pianos to one Rajah, before we left port, with twenty-six Malays bookin' on the same boat with that shipm't. That's why I came on this voyage. After we started, I found there were half a dozen Russians in with 'em also. I think—with any sort of luck—we'll be able to get the upper hand inside of the next day or two, but we've got to move carefully or we'll simply have the boat a shambles! First thing to find out is where they've got the purser, chief, mate, steward and Sparks. My room-steward has just told me that the Captain is in his own room, handcuffed; and he thinks the others are handcuffed also—every officer on the boat. The crew is under the guns of Malays in the fo'c'stle—the stewards and cooks are in the same position in galley and pantry. It doesn't take so many utterly reckless men to hold up an entire boat like this if they start in with a sudden surprise-attack. When you can do so without being overheard, ask your own stewards to find out which of the Malays have those handcuff-keys. And ascertain, if you can, where they've got

the officers locked up—then we'll have another confab after tiffin. Tell the women they're not to worry."

Presently Coffin remarked in the hearing of one of the armed Malays that he was going below for a sponge-off—and went down to his room. Locking the door, he unbolted the one in the bathroom—went into the other cabin—and locked that door behind him. Then he slipped the headphones over his ears, and switched on the microphones in the wireless-house above—but couldn't detect even the faintest rustle to indicate that anybody was in the shack.

He put two feather-pillows over the key and "chopper" to prevent the slightest noise being heard outside in the gangway from the saloon, and began sending out the Lloyd's emergency signal, with very nearly two kilowatts of power. In five minutes, to his relieved satisfaction, he got an acknowledgment from the Lloyd's station at Singapore—and commenced sending a message in Lloyd's code:

S. S. CHINDWIN. Bay of Bengal.
Approximately, Lat. 6-15, Lon. 94-21, E.

Boat in possession of Malay pirates—heading down West Coast Sumatra for some river-mouth. Course due 135 degrees. One officer, five men, killed. Pirates disposed avoid further butchery if no resistance. Hope to regain possession in day or two, but may need assistance badly. Advise nearest destroyer or cruiser. Do not call until you pick up further signals. Repeat back full message.

Signed: C—96.

As the operator at the other end knew the private code automatically, his response came inside of three minutes with the assurance that a fast destroyer would be trailing them within an hour or two—around Sabang. Again Coffin listened without result for any sound of movement in the wireless-house. Then he turned the bunk-clothes over his instruments—went through into his own cabin and presently went up on deck again.

HE had so carefully avoided all appearance of any particular interest in the boat aside from what he naturally would feel as a former shipmaster and friend of Hardinge's, that none of the Malays suspected him of being other than what he seemed—the majority of them apparently liked him, and the suave Mr. Sedikit Ikan joked him about the unexpected change in their positions. It was a perfectly natural proceeding for his room-steward, who also waited upon him in the saloon, to come to him occa-

sionally for orders or to see what wine he might be ordering with his dinner. As none of the stewards had made any attempt to go beyond their regular duties, the Malays made no objection to Bridges' talking with Sir Edward a few minutes, and as Coffin was standing by the rail after tiffin with his four friends, Bridges approached them.

"We've turned up a bit of information between us, sir. The mate an' purser are locked into one of the vacant state-rooms—Number Thirty-five—port-gangway—B deck. Mr. Henderson an' Mr. Innes are in the next room—Thirty-four. The assistant engineer an' the third mate are in the second room beyond—all of 'em handcuffed. Malays next to 'em have the keys."

"How many of the Malays on that gangway?"

"Five, sir—three in one room—two in the other. One lot have their watch below while the other are on deck. We take in their meals an' then they turn in. Them guards in the saloon gangways an' wells are all of 'em second class. The saloon Malays are the bosses."

"How many do you figure there are altogether, Bridges?"

"Twenty-six of their own lot, sir. The six Russians are the engine-room lot—with one wireless man. They're helpin' on that end, but I don't fawncy they'll fight. The Malays will—all of 'em!"

"Bridges, do you and the other stewards care about getting into this mess—taking a pretty good chance of getting shot or knifed?"

"Rawther! I'd awnswer for a dozen of us, sir—any time you give the word! If we only 'ad a shootin'-iron or so—"

"I wouldn't suggest your trying it without! If I see a good chance, I'll tip you off. Then you chaps drift along to my cabin, one at a time—just carelessly—some coming along for'ard, and some aft—four or five minutes apart. Catch the idea?"

They nodded almost imperceptibly.

AN hour later, the passengers along the lee gangway on the B deck were startled by hoarse growling, punctuated by shouts and yelps from up forward—heavy thuds, as of blows being struck. They ran along the gangway to look down into the forward well-deck.

A man's figure, with most of the clothing torn from it and the head almost severed, was being tossed over the rail. On the hatch-cover, a blood-spattered Malay

was calmly wiping his kris. In the scuppers were four motionless Orientals. One of the deck-hands had managed to get loose—run up the fo'c'stle-companion—grab a capstan-bar from the rack—and lay about him with it in wide sweeps which smashed three skulls and broke the neck of a fourth man. The odds, however, had been against him. . . .

Sir Edward glanced at his four friends—and nodded grimly. This sort of thing couldn't go on.

Shortly after midnight, five grotesque figures in gas-masks, German war-helmets and bullet-proof vests, crept silently along the saloon gangway with gas bombs in thin containers. At the entrance to the saloon, they spotted where each of the Malay guard was sitting, gun in hand—and threw the bombs with as unerring precision as they would have bowled so many cricket-balls. They dodged back out of sight before the Orientals could turn around or see anything to fire at. In another moment, all three of the guards were losing consciousness from the fumes. To tie them securely and lay them out on the transom-seats under the ports was the work of less than ten minutes—during which the masked figures opened some of the weather ports to let a draft of air blow the gas out.

THEN they went up to the B deck and along the port-gangway to Stateroom Number Thirty, where they knew that three of the saloon Malays were taking their watch below. In response to a sharp knock, the door was unlocked and opened. Two bombs were instantly thrown inside—and the door pulled shut until the gas had time to become effective. After a couple of moments the attacking party went inside and trussed up the pirates—searching them for the handcuff-keys, which were presently found. To liberate the six officers and unlock their irons was the work of less than five minutes. Taking them below and beckoning to Bridges, down one of the saloon gangways, the party silently made its way back to Sir Edward's cabin—where the officers, and the stewards with Bridges, were equipped with helmets, masks, vests and guns.

There were now twenty-three in Coffin's party; ten of these went back to the after rail where they could look down into the well—faintly outlined by the glow from a single fifty-watt incandescent. The others divided into a couple of parties—one going silently along to the

foot of the port-ladder leading up to the bridge and wheel-house—the other gathering by the starboard-ladder on the weather side. The sky was overcast with heavy clouds—the boat-deck being so dark that one could scarcely make out objects ten feet away. Each shadowy group could also look down into the forward well where another single light revealed the figures of seven Malays—four squatting in the shadows and smoking Burmese cheroots while three were asleep on the hatch. Two of the saloon Malays also were smoking, at the starboard end of the bridge, when suddenly—without the slightest indication that any other craft was near—the dazzling beam from a powerful searchlight, not more than three hundred feet distant, outlined the forward part of the boat. A voice megaphoned:

"Hullo—the *Chindwin*! Stop your engines! Lay to—or we'll sink you! This is His Majesty's destroyer the *Sting-ray*!"

Taking the cigar out of his mouth, one of the Malays calmly picked up a megaphone and shouted back:

"There iss forty-five girrls, womens and children on board. If you interfere weeth us in any way, we weel 'ave t'em brought up here on t'e bridge an' cut t'eir throats, where you can see eet done! We air minding ouah own beezeiness—this is ouah pidgin. You go way, I theenk, an' mind youah own! Otheahwise eet iss bad for t'ose womens, I theenk!"

COFFIN raised his pistol and sent a ball crashing through the brute's heart. Soames—one of the big-game hunters—dropped the other one neatly.

The searchlight would have revealed the whole menacing group to the Malays, had they turned around and looked down over the bridge-rail! Then there was a fusillade from the Malays in the forward well-deck, returned with interest by the two groups on the boat-deck. Three sharp *pings* told where three shots ricocheted off the steel helmets, and a number of soft thuds, where others struck the bullet-proof vests. One after another, the Orientals pitched down upon the deck and died. After a few moments' pause, there was a sound of rushing feet padding up the fo'c'stle-companion and the rest of the Malays poured out into the well—to be shot down as they came.

Then Coffin dropped a pilot's-ladder

over the side, picked up the megaphone, and asked the destroyer to send a boat's crew aboard. The Russians in the engine-room had heard the shooting, and made no attempt to fight. By two in the morning, the dead pirates were thrown over the side, the decks cleaned, and the boat was on her course again with hearty congratulations from the destroyer's commander and his crew, who took off the Russians and three Malays—discovered hiding in the bunkers.

UPON the following day, the *Chindwin* put in at Penang to unload the pianos—and her officers met with a great surprise. The Rajah not only had ordered them, but actually had an agent on the spot to pay the freight.

At Coffin's suggestion, Captain Hardinge accepted the payments in the presence of a Lloyd's agent who happened unaccountably to be on the spot at the time—and receipted the bills. Then the Lloyd's agent—when Coffin insisted upon it—ordered the casing of one piano to be unscrewed. Eighty Mauser rifles were revealed, instead of the supposed piano. One after another, the cases were found to contain rifles, except the last two, which were packed with rounds of ammunition. As delivery had been safely and regularly made, Lloyd's had no further interest in the matter—but the British Government officials at once confiscated the shipment as contraband.

At dinner, that evening—when the *Chindwin* was proceeding down the Strait—Coffin advanced the idea that the Malays were revolutionists against the Dutch Government and had plotted in London to divert the Rajah's shipment for their own uses. Later in the evening, he sent a wireless message of warning to the Governor-General at Batavia. After this he went up to Hardinge's room for a cigar and chat.

"Frank—I think I can turn in a report of this affair which will save your ticket," he said seriously. "You probably did as well as half the shipmasters on deep water would have done in the circumstances. But it really wasn't well enough, by a damned sight! You were too cocksure—too contemptuous in your viewpoint on all Malays. There was nothing to prevent your getting the wind up as I did and taking the same precautions—but you couldn't see any reason for it. You really shouldn't forget this!"

One of Mr. New's incomparable stories of the Free Lances in Diplomacy will appear in the next, the August, issue.

Red Terror

The thrill-packed adventure of two Americans forced into a death-struggle with the sinister secret police of Soviet Russia.

By S. ANDREW WOOD

The Story Thus Far:

“LEE ARMITAGE, American citizen,” read the secretary of Russia’s public prosecutor from the secret record before him. “Architect and consultant designer of the Schnitzler Building, New York. Engaged to design and assist in building the new Asiatic Palace. Speaks Russian. Difficult under surveillance. Is Capitalist in ideology. Works conscientiously. Enamored of a woman of his own nationality, Ishbel Dane, who belongs to the Party in Moscow (see *dossier*). No friend of the Revolution. Possibly dangerous. Being watched closely. . . .

“Lidoshka Wei, artiste of the Eastern Propagandafilm. Chinese girl revolutionary (see GPU Agents). Girlhood spent among armies of Chang. Counter-revolutionary General Tse died while L. W. was in his tent.” (“Judith and Holofernes!” commented Koregorvsky, the Prosecutor wagging his head). “Brought to Moscow as reward and became cinema-star. No flaw in her devotion to the State.

“Ishbel Harrison Dane, American citizen. American woman of society who has given up her possessions to come to Moscow. Lives with the artiste Lidoshka Wei. Enthusiastic but untried.

“Prohackai, a Mongol, priest in a Buddhist monastery. Abandoned religion and preached the Brotherhood of Man in 1927. Moscow 1928; then propaganda in the East. Greatly successful. Early this year proved receiving heavy bribes from counter-revolutionaries in Asia. For details see *dossier* “Espionage GPU.””

And now the dread Gay-pay-oo began to function in its sinister fashion. The suspected Prohackai was found murdered—pinned by a sword to a Buddha in the apartment of Lidoshka Wei. The Chinese girl had loved him—and had killed

him at the order of the terrible Three Letters.

Armitage’s turn came next. For Erik Valentine, a handsome half-Russian secretly in the service of the Gay-pay-oo, was also in love with Ishbel Dane; and he knew he could never win her while Armitage lived. He therefore provoked the American to a quarrel, and taking sudden advantage, strangled him. Thrown, supposedly dead, on a refuse dump, Armitage was rescued by a band of child waifs and brought back to life. And Sasha the Frog, chief of these waifs, took him under his special care and provided him with the clothes and identification-card of a Russian workman.

Valentine at last won Ishbel’s reluctant consent to a marriage ceremony. Back at his luxurious quarters, he confessed to his bride his connection with the Gay-pay-oo. And Ishbel, terrified and rebellious, fled from the apartment.

A few days later Ishbel was kidnapped and delivered to Valentine’s house by G.P.U. agents. But Armitage, who in his Russian disguise was watching over her, gained admission by a ruse and had the satisfaction of knocking Valentine down. But a concealed microphone betrayed him, and with Ishbel, he fled for his life.

Sasha the Frog again came to Armitage’s rescue and delivered him over to the care of Lisa, the blind girl whose drunken husband Armitage was impersonating. And now suddenly and strangely an apparent path to freedom opened: Lidoshka Wei offered to take Armitage and Ishbel across the frontier to Poland in her airplane.

The plan was carried out; Armitage and Ishbel were landed at twilight on the edge of a forest and started walking for the boundary, only to fall into a trap set for them by Valentine.

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"I shall take
Ishbel and Ar-
mitage to Stalin
as soon as you
have died—beast
of a generation
for whom I killed
Prohachai!"

Knocked senseless by a soldier's rifle-butt, Armitage was taken to Moscow and thrown into the Butyrka prison; and Ishbel Dane, placed at her old hospital laboratory work, heard nothing of him until Valentine came to her with dreadful news—and a dreadful alternative. Lee had been condemned to death; Valentine could save him—and would if Ishbel would come to him, Valentine.

Desperate, Ishbel gave her consent; and presently Valentine brought to her a forged telegram purporting to be from Armitage safe in Warsaw. Instead, Armitage was even then being marched to the execution-pit of the Butyrka. . . .

A strange rescue saved him. For Sasha the Frog had followed the sewers into the prison; and a horde of rats which that weird Russian waif drove

out created a diversion which enabled Armitage, though wounded by a rifle-shot through a shoulder-muscle, to plunge back into the great sewer with Sasha. A nightmare journey through the catacombs of Moscow followed, then refuge in an empty house closed because of smallpox. Here Armitage garbed himself in fresh clothing provided by Sasha. *(The story continues in detail:)*

EVERY city has its own hymn of life, whether comfortable plain-song or fiery chant. Rhythm runs everywhere.

To Lee Armitage, since the Revolution, the rhythm of Moscow had always been the dull percussion of a hammer, with

strange, sinister touching cries behind it. Strain his ears as he might, he could never find real laughter in it; the rhythm was too merciless.

It beat now at his temples as he sat on one of the high wooden tiers above the five sawdust-rings of the Circus Technicum—a fugitive from the firing-squad, hiding under a pink flush on the cheekbones, a hair-crop through which his scalp glowed, and the full dress of a young *komsomol*. By his side sat a demure lad of fourteen or so, who munched chocolate and watched the ring below. . . . Even in that, there was no laughter. Solemn, tense, the banks of faces looked down on the trappings of the oldest buffoonery in the world.

Armitage clutched his yellow program and read it unseeingly.

"Here is a circus with a Revolutionary content: The pain and agony of the workers, sweating and straining under the lash of the overseer. A worker faints from exhaustion and the merciless boss attempts to whip him. . . . One of the workers delivers a fiery speech. Immediately the police rush in, clubbing right and left. . . . The scene reopens with the workers in possession of the factory and in alliance with natives against colonial troops. In the clash between the Revolutionary masses and the troops, the factory is set on fire. The sluice-gates are opened, the arena is flooded, the workers leap into the lake, the factory goes up in flame, the troops and workers fight in the water. . . . The scene changes to a tropical island in the middle of the lake. The palm-trees are arrayed in red bunting; a large group of Red native partisans are gathered beneath them, singing Revolutionary songs—"

Sasha's paper bag came poking against his breast.

"Take one, little brother. The green shawl is five tiers below us. She will join us as we leave the circus. It is roundabout, but necessary."

ARMITAGE looked through the glare of the spotlights which streamed from the high roof. He could see no green shawl. A deep lassitude was on him because of the blood he had lost. Even his iron stamina was weakened by it. Green Shawl—whoever she was—was to take charge of him, and hide him, when this Propaganda circus was over. Was it Lee Armitage or Feodor Petrovitch whose ropes were being gnawed free by the kind little mice of the Mos-

cow underworld? He sat dizzily, and tried to puzzle it out, but without result.

The band of Emancipated Negroes blared the "Internationale," a vast portrait of Lenin was undraped, and the circus finished. The chattering crowd swept them toward the exits. At any moment, a heavy hand might drop upon his shoulder. . . . But instead, he was walking between the swaggering Sasha, and Green Shawl, into the electric arcs of the boulevard.

It was just about then Lee Armitage became certain he could not hang onto consciousness for much longer.

Green Shawl slipped her arm into his. In the glare of a huge wall fire-sign, a tendril of red hair strayed from beneath her vivid head-covering, and Armitage stared stupidly at it.

"So it's you, Lisa."

"It is I, Feodor. But do not talk."

Armitage looked round, still stupidly. Sasha the Frog, having worked his miracle, had vanished; he was in the hands of another convoy. Lisa Semenovna, wife of Feodor Petrovitch, had him in her firm warm hold, walking through the bright thronged streets with him. But at the corner of Tverskaya, he sagged and leaned against a lamp-post.

"Clear out, Lisaveta," he muttered.

"I want to faint here."

Lisa's hold tightened, her eyes shining with pleasure at the intimate name. Vainly Armitage fought against the blackness that flapped out at him from the very heart of the fire-sign across the street. He slipped to the pavement in Lisa's arms. . . .

"To the steamer landing-stage," said Lisa to the droshky-driver.

The man grinned down at Armitage's young communist's rig-out.

"Ho! A cockerel of the Party and drunk! What is the world coming to?"

"Would you have a man sober at his own wedding?" asked Lisa sedately. "It was the first wine he had ever tasted. Make haste, brother. We go down the river on our honeymoon."

The driver made a kissing sound which was at once appreciation of Lisa and an adjuration to his horse. The girl's face was fierce with tenderness as she leaned over Armitage in the darkness of the vehicle. No, he was not bleeding; it was merely weakness. If he died, then, it would be in her arms. . . .

At the landing-stage, a little steamer stood, already crowded with people. How well she knew that little steamer which

brought holiday-makers from the villages down the river, and took them back again! It was thus that Lisa had come up from her own little village of Plavsk two years before, and met the real Feodor—who had kept her in Moscow, to her sorrow.

There were other drunken ones on the steamer besides the red-haired girl's young man. One did not take a holiday in Moscow every day! But these two were a honeymoon couple. Down the river, near Plavsk, they had hired a *dacha*, one of the little timber cabins, in which the city folk spent summer holidays. A little three-days' honeymoon, Lisa said shyly. She had a cough that tore her, and her young husband was log-drunken from the unaccustomed wine the wedding guests had poured down his throat. So they were made comfortable and left alone in their little corner of the crowded deck, away from the accordions and the howling singers.

The brandy-flask in Lisa's hand shook, as the steamer churned its way slowly down the river and left Moscow behind.

"Lisa! Lord! I went out, didn't I? What happened?" It was in English that Armitage spoke and she pressed her hand over his mouth.

His eyes closed again. Perhaps he did not remember. What if he forgot everything, like Big Anton of her village who fell from the threshing-machine and had all his memory of the past wiped out? This unknown, this kind Feodor who was hers again for the moment—

Lisa's eyes shone. There was no past for her, and no future. Just the present, and a day or two on the honeymoon island by Plavsk, where Sasha the Frog had bidden her hide her Feodor. For a brief while, that American girl in Moscow could spare him. No future. . . . Lisa took her handkerchief from her lips and shrugged at it. Thank God, the thing at her lungs did not make her thin and ugly. It would beat the blindness, because it was quicker, and that too was good. By night she could see better than by daylight, even yet.

Those who were awake heard the little bride singing softly to herself, as the steamer plugged on through the starlight after the last red furnace had sunk behind, and only the reeds and the trees and the big collective farms, sunk in darkness, were left.

At dawn the couple left the steamer and went ashore at Plavsk, with three sleep-doped old women.

"Are you stronger, Feodor?"

"A bit. But Lisa—"

He reeled with sickness even yet, fought savagely for strength for a minute, then gave up the attempt. In a not unpleasant torpor, he watched Lisa unmoor a small canoe from among the willows.

IT was a small, flat island, tangled in willows, and thick with young firs. The mist shrouded it deeply in that moment before sunrise, but a fair-sized cabin became visible as they landed.

"It is a honeymoon *dacha*," said Lisa, the color stirring in her delicate face. "The committee of the factory where I worked owns it, you understand. They use it for such a purpose for those with a clean *cheestka* who marry. No one intrudes upon people on their honeymoon, which is why Sasha the Frog sent you with me—"

Armitage barely heard. If it was in one of the towers of St. Basil cathedral that Lisa hid him, it was a matter of indifference, just then.

"Do you remember all that has happened?" she asked.

"Not much of it, Lisa. I want to sleep—sleep and sleep."

"Yes"—quickly. "You must sleep."

Armitage dropped on an old horsehair couch. All his life, sleep had always been better than food to him, when his body was weakened; but for that sleep in the cul-de-sac of the sewer, he would have bled to death.

The cabin was hot and simmering beneath a fierce sun when he awoke. He felt ravenous and clear-headed. The wound was clean, for it no longer throbbed, and there was a new bandage on it. Lisa! What would he have done without little Lisa—twice?

He lay there relaxed, full of a fatalism that his Western soul had never even pictured before. Presently he sat up sharply at the sound of a murmur behind the thin partition. Startled, Armitage tiptoed over to peer through the crack of the half-open door.

There was nobody there save Lisa. She stood upright, with something cupped ashamedly in her hands. It was a small ikon. Lisa Semenovna, who had had a good anti-God education and had been brought up in the Way of Biological Truth since childhood, was saying her prayers! A Puritan, possessed by the Destroyer and worshipping sin in secret, could not possibly have looked more ashamed and abashed. . . .



Lisa saw the flash.
... Tibor spun and
dropped, hitting her
with his outflung arm.
Then above her heart
came a gaping pain
and she too fell.

"Make him like Big Anton, God," said Lisa's low voice. "Let him forget who he was, and think himself mine. Only for a day or two—if a stranger and a proletarian may be so bold as to dictate, God! He is one of your Capitalists, I think. Perhaps one of your miracles will act on him, God. One never knows. . . . Amen. This is the sixth time of asking."

Armitage crept back to the horsehair couch. It was a minute or two before Lisa slipped softly in, and bent over him. A low cry of pleasure left her as his eyes opened.

"Better?" she asked anxiously.

"A lot, Lisaveta. Do we eat anything in this honeymoon cabin?"

"There is plenty. But first, listen. It was impossible to tell you when you were ill. Do you see this bruise on my arm? There are a lot more on the rest of my body, I can tell you. Feodor did that—the real Feodor. He came home suddenly, and beat me like hell afire. That matters nothing. But listen: The death-warrant is in the name of Feodor Petrovitch, isn't it? They will go to the Little Sretinka and find him there. Perhaps they will take days to find out their mistake. It will put a stitch in their side—for the police like to have

everything in order, even if it is a mere porridge of lies. Do you understand, my Feodor?"

"Not one word," said Armitage.

"Do you mean—" Lisa flushed, then paled. Her hand went to her throat.

"Gibberish about some Feodor! Who is Feodor, if I'm not? Something has happened to my head, Lisa. In front it is all right. But it is wood behind. Did I hurt it?"

Big Anton had spoken almost those words. Lisa sat staring, red curls outlined on her white forehead, looking like some little guttersnipe Titian child. Involuntarily, Armitage turned away from her awe-struck gaze. What matter? The child had pretended finely for him, among the sour odors of the Little Sretinka. The sands were running out for both of them. If it pleased her—

"It was at the wedding," said Lisa, in a small husky voice. "Tibor, the monk-who-was, shot at you. He was drunk, and the bullet—the bullet—"

Lisa's voice stuck in her throat. She was a good liar, but this was something different. The God of the Capitalist wolves, who had worked her miracle, was listening critically. She said in a strangled voice, "I must cook some food,"—and fled into the kitchen.

PLAVSK, with its wooden church now a huge barn for the *kolkhoz* farms, was only a mile away on the river-bank. But they were busy with the spring sowing, and nobody came near to the little island where the *dacha* stood among the sun-soaked trees.

"One treads on the past and on the future when on honeymoon," said Lisa, throwing back the freckled cream of her face and her small shapely nose to laugh. "I have stopped the clock. It is wiser that way. Ah, I would give my life for you, my Feodor, give it twenty, thirty times—till my body was too much in tatters to be of use. . . . Does that wooden head begin to remember anything yet?"

Lee Armitage would shake his head when she asked him that, nearly every hour, and watch the mingled guilt and relief that passed across her face. He was still weak and Lisa lay curled on the greensward by his side, wagging her bare toes. Once she crept over to him, crushed her face against his and smothered him in her scented russet curls. But, though lit like a lantern with happiness, she was shy. Her violet eyes

were scared; a child could have read through her make-believe. Now and then she vanished suddenly, and was white and drawn for a few minutes when she returned from enduring the hemorrhages which she so carefully hid from this Feodor who had lost his memory. . . .

She could swim like a fish. Her white body gleamed through the willows in the morning sunlight, an exquisite little ginger naiad of the Moscow streets. But not for long. She came pattering to the cabin door, her blue frock over her wet body.

"And you love me, my Feodor?"

"Like hell."

"You said that, after you had half-killed Tibor for me. How glad I am we are Russian! In the capitalist countries, I understand, all the handsome men are bought by wealthy women and paid for their love. They call them gigolos. The alternative is unemployment and starvation. There are one million some thousand gigolos on the Riviera, where many of the parasite women change their frocks twice in the same evening."

"They should be whipped through the streets—the women, I mean."

"You could never whip a woman, my Feodor. Even if you found I had been telling you all kinds of lies,—when the wood goes out of your head,—you wouldn't whip me."

"How could I, Lisaveta?"

Though he was by nature no believer in doom, it was a strange lassitude that had Armitage strongly in thrall on that river island while in Moscow telephones buzzed and the great police-machine moved to find the man who had escaped from the Butyrka. Sooner or later he knew, they would find him. There was only one possible consolation—there might still be a sporting chance of killing Valentine with his own hands. Weak as he was, his strength would be sufficient for that. . . .

"Thirty hours," said Lisa. "I have counted them."

She left Armitage and went into the river again. The water was warm and caressing. Thirty hours. Too soon Sasha the Frog would come, or else the Chinese woman Lidoshka Wei, or even the American woman he loved when the wood was not in his head. He would know the truth then. But he was so kind that he would forgive. It mattered little, since Lisa Semenovna would certainly die soon. . . .

A little breeze had arisen and rustled the reeds and brake of the river-bank. Lisa ceased to splash her white body in the shadows, and listened. She did not like that movement of the willows. It was like somebody watching, crouched there, moving furtively, following her.

A water-bird squattered across the river. There was no other sound. But, looking with narrowed, tigerish eyes, she saw the curling smoke of a cigarette, and among the bushes a face that she knew. It stayed there, fixed, absorbed, sylvan as a satyr under the trees. . . . The end had come.

Lisa flashed to the point of the island, where she had left the blue frock. Quietly she untied the canoe, and paddled downstream. The cigarette-smoke and the face were both still there. The face broke into a grin.

"There is no sense in such modesty, Lisa. Come ashore, white one. So this is a second honeymoon, eh?"

TIBOR, the monk-who-was, who had been house-spy at the Little Sretinka! He pulled away the cigarette where it stuck to his underlip and threw the stub into the water. Quiet triumph was all over him.

"Right the first time, Comrade Tibor," replied Lisa coldly, though she trembled. "Feodor and I have forgiven each other. We took the *dacha* yesterday. He will have no intruders. If he saw me talking to you, he would strangle both of us."

"Jealous, eh?" Tibor's hatchet face screwed. He was enjoying himself. "That's something new. Once, he could barter his little wife for vodka. Feodor loves you again?"

"Like—" Lisa pulled herself up and spat. "That for your questions, woman-hound! In Russia there is no bartering of wives. Yes, he loves me. He sleeps in the *dacha* at the moment, but if I should scream there would be sulphur to smell."

The man scratched his head; his grin was almost vacant.

"Strange! For yesterday afternoon the Three-Letter police came to Sretinka to search for little Feodor Petrovitch. They found him, too. He was fool enough to try to climb through the window and they shot him; his behind part made a good target. They carried him to hospital. What a recovery! Scream now, Lisa, and let me see him."

The girl stepped slowly ashore from the canoe. She bent blindly to pick a

blade of grass and put it in her teeth to chew. She had no knife, nothing to kill with; and she was not good at killing, as Koregorvsky's case had proved. . . .

"One must lie now and again, Tibor," she said carelessly, lifting her face. "Women are made that way. Men boast. Women lie. That is the difference. Will Feodor die?"

Tibor's loose mouth opened.

"He will limp. That is, if they don't shoot him off altogether, erysipelas and all. Though when I come to think of it, he had no erysipelas this time. Little devil! You are like the rest of them. Who is the man?"

Lisa's thoughts raced. She had no ikon with her this time, but again she prayed to the Capitalist God, since He had done so well the time before.

"A secret!"—her smile was brazen, yet demure. "He is young and good-looking and a clever workman. I have paid that Feodor back for his neglect. Perhaps it would have been you, but for the insult of trying to barter me. I am a free woman."

Lisa's little fist made crisp contact with his jaw as Tibor clutched at her amorously, but she still smiled exasperatingly, and asked:

"Did you follow me to here?"

"To the circus. It was necessary." The wet green eyes shifted. "And besides, I could not sleep for thinking of you. I was on the steamer. . . . I have a lot of money, Lisa."

"No doubt you stole it from the House Savings Club." Lisa wrinkled her nose. "But I am not squeamish. This man writes lectures all day, instead of making love. He is of the Party, and very intellectual. Perhaps I shall tire of him. But you must wait."

"For how long? First in Feodor's pocket, then in this one's—but never in mine. You are cursedly anti-social!"

Lisa spoke with the conscious arrogance of a desired woman.

"I should say I was very social. But I make no promises. You shall stay in the village and not watch me. It will be healthier, in any case. Serge—that is his name—has a revolver in his holster. Do you want me, Tibor?"

"Like hell, *matushka*."

A white smile twisted the corners of Lisa's mouth at the answer. The man quivered like an owlet, waiting for a tidbit. But he must be kept away from the island for a day or two longer, until she could think out something. He was

a peril. Perhaps she would go with him. Who knew? Lisa knew simply that she would go even with Satan—if it was to lead him away from where her kind Feodor lay in hiding. . . .

"He will come to search for me. Listen! I think I will come; but I am no cheap wanton. You will wait for me in the village till I come? It may be one, two or three days. About that, I please myself."

Tibor caught her in his long arms. She pushed him away and sprang back lightly into the canoe. She called:

"If I should catch you spying once, it is all off. One love at a time, and that one in private. Such is my rule!"

The small paddles dipped heavily. Lisa's red head hung. *Nitchevo!* Everything ended, and the sweeter, the sooner. In Russia, nothing remained still; and she too must move, now.

LISA waited until dark. Armitage was not aware of her absence till after she had gone. By train, it was no more than an hour's journey to Moscow, and she had money. Sasha had given it to her. He it was who had stolen the key of the *dacha*—that uncanny one who could have stolen Lenin's body from its tomb if he needed it! The clangor, the fire-signs, the unquiet strain of life, was all about her as the clocks played their eight o'clock revolutionary tune.

It was Sasha the Frog she sought—Sasha, or that strange Chinese woman, Lidoshka Wei, who had planned with her to kill Koregorovsky. Her own poor little brain could not deal with the situation by itself. But Sasha, the Jack o' Lantern, came and went. She would have to wait until late before she dared to swim across to the old gasometer outside the Little Sretinka and get news of him from little Maria Vassilissa, and time was precious. The hours which had been a sweet lifetime on the river island were now shaking themselves out.

Standing at the corner of Dmitrovka, Lisa tried the Capitalist God again. . . .

A soft voice sounded in her ear, and for the first and last time in her life, Lisa Semenovna crossed herself.

"Come with me, little Lisa. You are very noticeable, standing there."

It was the Chinese woman. She moved alongside with a creak of leather, for she was in uniform. Her smile glided at Lisa. The tiny limp gave her something of a man's swagger. Once they passed a group of yellow brothers, some

Mongols, or God knew what, up from the ends of the earth for some great gathering at the Kremlin. Two of them sent lightning glances at the Chinese woman, stopped, and bowed. She gave them back a little veiled smile which vanished. Not one word left her after her first greeting. But there was some kind of strange laughter glittering in her eyes.

Lisa began faintly, "My Feodor—"

Lidoshka shook her head. They passed out of the lights of a big square into the shadows of a quieter street. Lisa began to feel hypnotized. No wonder. This Chinese woman had been the wife of the great Prohackai and now gave herself as a toy to Koregorovsky, whose public assassination she had plotted, when any night she could stick him; she was the Little Lotus of the Propaganda-film and yet the friend of her Feodor and had sat like some *Bez Prizorny* of another race in the old gasometer, whispering her grief about the American girl!

"We go in here," said Lidoshka with a brilliant smile. Then, touching Lisa's cheek reassuringly with her finger: "This is all fore-ordained; but for that matter, so is everything—though one has to wait wearily for the voice to speak, sometimes."

It was an artist's apartment, one could tell by the swinging lamp, and the high skylight of the landing. The Chinese woman drummed her fingertips on the scrolled and embossed door, still smiling, while Lisa Semenovna stood back dumbly, as the bronze handle turned, and would not have been surprised to see the Grand Chan of Tartary there. . . .

Ishbel Dane opened Valentine's door. She still wore her coat half-slipped from her shoulders, as though she had but recently arrived there. The sight of Lisa brought a little twist to her lips which passed into a smile. Her look glanced past the Chinese woman.

"How did you manage to find my new home? Come inside, Lisa. There's a lot of news."

"I think I will come inside also," said Lidoshka Wei gently, brushing past Ishbel into the room. It was only lighted by the luminous glow of a standard-lamp and Erik Valentine, standing by a silver samovar in the alcove was scarcely visible until he came forward. Lidoshka, after one careless look at him, sank daintily into a chair. A dull anger at the Chinese girl seized Ishbel, though she still did not look at her. Instead, she spoke clearly to the tongue-tied Lisa.

"This is my husband—or at least, the man I love now: Comrade Valentine, an artist, Lisa. I have just come to him. It is through his good offices that your Feodor is now in Warsaw and will not come back to Russia again in a hurry. He was American and had the wrong ideology. This is Lisa Semenovna, who was concerned in Lee's adventures, Erik."

Valentine bowed, but did not look at Lisa. His eyes could not leave the deep-shadowed chair where Lidoshka Wei sat, one amber hand alone visible in the light, where it rested on her breeched knee. In the ensuing silence, a husky sound came from the red-headed little Russian girl—but it was Lidoshka's voice that spoke.

"He is not in Warsaw, Ishbel."

ISHBEL turned slowly. The image of Erik Valentine registered itself on her brain, though it was the Chinese girl she watched with fascination as she lighted a cigarette. The Chinese girl, telling lies to torment her. . . .

"I must always hurt you, it seems; always knock down what you have built up. He was in the Butyrka, condemned to the highest measure, but he did the impossible. He escaped. Never fear, Ishbel, he is still in Russia."

Valentine stepped forward, smiling.

"You know what Lidoshka is, Ishbel. This is one of her Oriental star-turns. I told you Koregorvsky would have his knife in me. You had the wire from Warsaw."

Lidoshka shook the ash from her cigarette.

"Erik sent an agent to Warsaw to send that. It has been done before, hundreds of times."

"A web of lies," said Valentine lightly. "We live in it, unfortunately. Secret police, politics, high intrigue. They have them all in the Capitalist countries too."

"This girl Lisa could take you to him, Ishbel."

Lisa found a croaking voice.

"If it is Feodor you speak of, he is at the honeymoon island—"

"Hush!" said Lidoshka, warningly, and then, through the smoke-film of her cigarette: "Do you see falsehoods in Erik's eyes, Ishbel? He and I are good at masking our faces. One learns to. But the eyes tell; more with him than with one of my race. . . . Yes, I knew you were coming here and followed you. Lisa was in the Dmitrovka. I think Prohackai has begun to speak, though

faintly yet." She laughed. "Will you go with Lisa?"

"We'll both go," said Valentine. He sent a long, aquiline look at Lidoshka and bent over her. "We'll get that fox for a peace-offering to that wrinkled lover of yours, Lidoshka."

Lidoshka shook her sleek head.

"You and I are not invited, Erik, so we stay here. Did I say that the Comrade Deputy wishes to speak to you? He is angry about all this pother, I am afraid, and calls it a grave efficiency-lapse. He does not believe in letting love interfere with the business of the State. Again Lidoshka laughed. "How he raged! You perceive I am in uniform? He held me responsible for you, even if it became a matter of life and death."

Ishbel saw the little palm pat the leather holster that hung from the Chinese girl's lanyard, and saw Erik Valentine's hands drop from the arms of Lidoshka's chair; but it was all through a mist—the quiet room, those two figures. She ought to have been unnerved, limp, shouting aloud at her own childish simplicity. Alternatively, since this could only be another of Lidoshka's Oriental cat-and-mouse affairs, another blind morass before the end, she ought not to go.

Ishbel pulled her coat slowly over her shoulders again. Everything looked normal in that studio of Erik's. That was what baffled one—the outward normality of life everywhere in Moscow. Lidoshka had only touched her holster for a second; Erik, with his long fair hair brushed back, tapped a cigarette on his case and did not move; Alexandra, his old servant, wobbled in and flustered out again at the sight of his guests. Dushkin, the first bassoon of the opera orchestra, who lived below, was fingering a difficult passage from "Elektra" before setting forth for the theater.

Erik spoke from the hearth-rug.

"You'll find yourself in peril. I wouldn't go, Ishbel. Purely as a friend I speak, because I've torn it badly, I guess. I haven't any idea where Armitage is. But you couldn't help him; nobody on earth could."

That was probably very true, thought Ishbel. The odd thing was that she had no notion now of helping Lee. She just wanted to be with him, to ask him if at about half-past eight that evening, a glow like a golden wave of utterly intoxicating happiness, in which there was not one shred or vestige of hope, had flooded him, as it flooded her at that moment.

"Lidoshka!"

"Ishbel?"

"If this is one of those subtle tricks of yours, as I suppose it is, could you lay off the climax for a little while? Just a little while, Lidoshka, that's all."

"It could be done. For a little while," answered Lidoshka gravely, looking at her over a shoulder-epaulette. "But bigger things than one's self move one, Ishbel. Now go! —Take her away, child."

DAWN was coming up over the dripping landscape, and the *dacha*, wet with dew, thrust a long shadow across the grass. The river changed to red and moss-green silk; a bell clanged faintly from the distant *kolkhoz* farm in Plavsk. The sun came up behind the network of alders. The poplars stood out like fingers against the radiant sky.

"That liar, liar, liar!" said Ishbel softly. "I must be easy to convince, Lee. Or maybe anything connected with Koregorvsky has the effect of a snake on a bird. He rattles his tail and the wits are numbed. I think that must be it."

"I wish you hadn't come," said Armitage.

Their hands were loosely linked where they sat on the rough little porch of the *dacha*. Ishbel lifted her face to the fresh perfumes of the dawn, and felt life drum within her as it only did at the beginning of a new day. She had come to Russia for the New Day. . . .

"Not really, you don't. I didn't come to help you escape again, Lee dear,"—she paused a moment, surveying the impossible,—"I only came to be with you. I don't see any way of getting you clear. We've struggled till the net's tangled round and round about our necks. Molotov has appointed a psychological committee to combat the fatalist ideology in the Russian character, what is called the *nitchevo* complex. But I think it has its uses."

"You're not Russian."

"We're all Jock Tamson's bairns, Lee."

A lassitude was upon Armitage, the same fatalism that was upon Ishbel. He could not fight against this strong, sweet woman by his side who was so willful to the last. All he cared for was her safety, yet she refused to let him care for it. He was conscious, beneath all that, of a hard joy and content, though perhaps there was cowardice in this contentment from hour to hour, each one of which might be the last.



Armitage was drying himself after his dip when the splash of paddles sounded, the mist shredded, and the prow of a canoe grated upon the shingle. Sasha the Frog stood upright in it. "Punch pops up again, Comrade Feodor!"

"You're the bravest woman in the world, I guess."

"Not while little Lisa is alive. She has just worked on, like a little fearless mole in the dark. And you don't know what terror and shame there is for a Soviet girl, Lee, in being up against the secret police. We've only just discovered the bugaboo. But it's the same disgrace to a good Muscovite that it would be to us to have dealings with a hangman, however innocent we were. That's what the Gay-pay-oo is—a giant hangman-genie who's spread over the sky, and nobody can put him back into his bottle. Let's stop talking about him."

LISA sang softly at the cookstove, though she too felt their overhanging fate. Everything was in the Chinese woman's hands. The wood had gone out of her Feodor's head at the sight of the woman he loved, as Lisa had known it would. All was over. But what mattered that, when for a brief while her Feodor had thought that she, Lisa Semenovna, was his woman?

There were other things to think of. There was Tibor, the monk-who-was, growing impatient in the village, waiting for his tidbit. Lisa climbed a tree after breakfast, and saw him in the deep meadow-grass, with a track as clear as the wake of a boat behind him, squatting there like some amorous baboon. In the Little Sretinka, they had nicknamed him, behind his back, the "Star-etz," which had been Gregori Rasputin's other name. If he saw that another woman was on the island, the hair might bristle on his back for fear he was neglecting the police-spy for the lover.

So Lisa paddled silently ashore, in the heat of the afternoon. She had on only the blue frock, which was low, to show the creamy skin of her bosom in contrast to the flame of her hair, and so light that every slim curve of her body sang its presence beneath it. Few in Plavsk would recognize Lisa Semenovna in such a garb. If they did, they would know what good girls became, when they left home for Moscow. . . .

Tibor lounged with a cigarette in the doorway of the Self-Improvement Club. The long street was empty; Plavsk was at work, in field and tan-pit.

The Staretz dragged her into the doorway. His low brow wrinkled, which was his way of laughing.

"They take me for a disguised agent of the Party come down to nose into

things. How they treat me with respect, not to say aversion! Well, then, tell me, who is this Serge who can afford to keep two women at once in his honeymoon *dacha*?"

"Hyena!" pouted Lisa. "You promised not to watch."

"I couldn't keep away. . . . Two of you! The collective system seems to be spreading to everything. I begin to suspect your Serge!" He grinned.

"Hold your tongue!" said Lisa waspishly. "How did I know she was coming? She is his soul-mate. I leave him tonight."

Tibor ran his tongue hungrily across his lips and Lisa got her hands ready to fend off his beard. With a tremendous effort, Tibor remained grinning and nodding, and was rewarded by Lisa's reaching out and pulling one of his large, platelike ears playfully.

"This evening we will go together—if you have money," she said carelessly.

Lisa left Tibor quivering in the vestibule of the Self-Improvement Club, with strict orders to remain there. She went swaggering in her shameless blue frock down the long village street, looking like the incarnation of all naughty redheads who ever return to their native townships. But nobody was there to know little Lisa Semenovna; and presently, with fists doubled and violet eyes swimming, she directed her steps to the river again.

Among the wild tulips in a little wood that sloped to the river, Lisa Semenovna, nicely hidden, sat down on a fallen tree-bolt and let the tears roll down her cheeks without wiping them. The air was still, and a bird sat on a branch, watching her. The roof of the *dacha* where Ishbel Dane and Lee Armitage waited for whatever was to befall showed through the trees, the river gurgled past gently, a steam-valve at the tannery in Plavsk hissed sleepily, and Lisa Semenovna cried. Once she thought she heard a twig crack, but it was only when something tugged at her frock from behind that she slewed round quickly.

It was Sasha the Frog who sat there in the long tough grass and surveyed her soberly for a time.

"I know for a certainty they are neither dead nor caught, yet," he said gravely, at length.

"It is nothing," said Lisa hastily. "One must weep sometimes."

Sasha chewed a stalk of grass. "It is unknown in my circles," he said. "It

makes one thirsty, I am told. I saw you in the village and followed you here. What is the news?"

"I brought the American girl down to him last night. The Chinese woman ordered it. The Three Letters don't know the hiding-place. But Tibor, of the Little Sretinka, tracked me here and will get on the scent soon. Therefore I am going away with him this evening."

"Good," approved Sasha unemotionally. His Botticelli face looked out of the grass like something painted there. "You can do him in at leisure, that way. But there is something worse than Tibor hanging round. Valentine the artist has smelled them out. I trailed him down here. He is in Plavsk and most likely saw you as you peacock down the street, just now."

"The artist!"

Sasha the Frog took a hunk of black bread from a wallet and drove pearly teeth into it.

"The same; with killing in him, all wrapped-up and ready for delivery. I've smelled it often enough to know it. It is not ordinary Three-Letter business he is here for. There will be a little extra, if Comrade Erik can manage it. It is a personal affair, you understand. I think it has become that between Erik and our Feodor."

Lisa sent a tiger's look at the child.

"Where is he?"

"Not within hearing, I hope!" A grin and a contemplative glance from Sasha. Then: "It is an occasion for a silent *komintern*. Let us sit still and think."

The reeds rustled. A great troop-carrying plane from Ufa, conveying delegates to the Kremlin from the Bashkir Republics, swooped past overhead with a tired sound. Grasshoppers chirped. Stone for Moscow tenements was blown out of the quarries ten miles behind Plavsk, with a dull, belated booming. A trout jumped in the water. Lisa's red curls made a bright patch against the green leaves. This Sasha was as near to her idea of the Capitalist God as she had ever met in the flesh, for cleverness and cunning. Suddenly, as his small fingers twisted thoughtfully into Lisa's, she knelt in the grass and cuddled the wise beautiful baby-face against her young bosom, whispering forlornly:

"I once had a *brudderkin* like you; but he fell among the knives of a threshing-machine in the village yonder, because he would help the State when he should have been at school—"

Sasha freed himself gently from her, and spat out without offence.

"My limbs fell among knives before I was born. They saved my face. My father was a handsome general, Red or White, I forget which. . . . So you go away with that tomcat Tibor tonight? *Ai*, but it would be strange if Valentine should take you and the unfrocked monk for those two we love!"

Silence. A long shiver that passed through Lisa. Sasha the Frog stroked her hand. A dragonfly hummed like a blue bullet between them. Tractors drummed in the distant fields.

"If he were watching—in the darkness, you mean."

Silence again. The Frog crammed small fists into his eyes, and rubbed them a little wearily.

"They are both damned foreigners. In their country, the black brothers are flogged and lynched. Their gang-men go about in diamonds, and their politicians are all belly and silk hat. Their unemployed die in the streets and it is said that many of their women do no work. They belong to a dying Imperialism."

"They are capitalist swine," said Lisa, "yet you and I love them."

Sasha scowled, then sighed.

"In that country there must be human beings, after all," he said. "Even in Russia, everything is not perfect yet. True, we are all good citizens—except me. I have the individualist ideology, I very much fear. But some day they shall take me into a school and make a good citizen out of me—if I like it—and, by the time I am a man, we may be at one with the people outside Russia. For they are human beings, I swear it; it is proved by these two, for we love them. The man is my comrade; the woman—"

"He loves her," said Lisa in a low voice. "That is enough."

SHE rose, and smiled down at Sasha. "This man Valentine will come on the island in the night and kill our Feodor, while he sleeps. He will not trouble Madame Butyrka again. Is that it?"

"He will hang round. . . . It is said that only little children can throw the rope that will catch a werewolf," said Sasha, squatting and pulling at the grass in an absorbed fashion. "I read it in a book of old peasant tales that was confiscated and replaced by Karl Marx Simplified. But it stuck."

TO Ishbel and Lee Armitage it seemed scarcely worth while going to sleep. Even on that river island, they guessed, the secret police would keep to the conventions and swoop during the night hours. But Lisa Semenovna, who had taken them in a kind of maternal charge, made some delicious *lobsha* for supper and then shook out the three mattresses. Armitage's wound had a healing ache about it that made him glad enough to rest it. He needed to nurse that torn shoulder, if luck was to give him even two seconds' chance with Valentine.

In the inner room where Ishbel and Lisa lay curled up, the moonlight came through a small window of the *dacha*. Ishbel looked across at the tousled red head, and felt uneasy. If they survived the night, could she get the devoted little thing on some mission to Moscow, out of harm's way? Koregorvsky would not this time be merciful to the wife of Feodor Petrovitch, if he found her in such company.

Ishbel wondered a little sleepily at her own detachment. At that very moment, it was not unlikely that the little island was being surrounded by Three-Letter men. Yet she could listen to a corncrake that croaked every now and then in the meadow. It was early in the year for corncrakes. . . .

It was ten o'clock by the hooter at the *kolkhoz* farm, when Lisa Semenovna stirred warily. That corncrake—which was no bird, but the Frog—still sounded now and then. The flooring of the *dacha* creaked slightly beneath her weight as she stole across. Ishbel slept. In the other room, her Feodor slept also. In the pool of moonlight, Lisa could see his fine kind face and strong throat—and her smile of farewell twisted.

But the corncrake croaked again. Lisa took from the wall Ishbel's cloak and the slouch hat and long tunic with metal buttons which Sasha had found for Armitage in the house of smallpox. With these over her arm she passed out of the *dacha* into the silver-slashed shadows of the island.

The moon was strong. But the undergrowth was thick. Where the canoe was moored the wet branches brushed Lisa's face. She tumbled the clothes into the small craft.

"Not a word! I was not going to quit without taking something. See the lovely silk lining!" She swung the cloak upon her shoulders with a gurgle of low laughter; then she knocked Tibor's as-

trakhan cap off into the water—madcap, excitedly. "And the handsome Garibaldi hat, and the jacket with swastika buttons! Put them on. I will not elope with a scarecrow!"

Tibor, the monk-who-was, sat open-mouthed, then obeyed. For three hours he had waited in the canoe; this ginger whirlwind had hidden him there. He hardly knew whether he was on his head or his feet. It was a very pleasant feeling.

"How the buttons shine! Pull for the shore, sailor. But keep to the shadows."

The canoe slid into a little bower of willows. It was easy to climb the banks. Once there, Lisa sent Tibor the glint of a mocking smile, and set off by the fringe of the meadow—the corncrake had stopped—to where the big trees sent their moon-shadows on the pasture. Then she melted and let him take her arm—but still it was she who chose the path. Tibor, his tomcat's brain awl, told himself that she should choose any path she wished, that kept them together—the redhead, the little warm, white thing—

"Quietly!" said Lisa. "As though we were running away!"

She stopped to crush back a cough; that accursed cough would mark her as Lisa, anywhere. Stifling it meant that blood came instead, but that mattered little indeed.

"Somebody follows us," said Tibor, turning with sudden uneasiness and scanning the shadows.

"Not Serge," answered Lisa scornfully. "He is with his soul-mate! Are you afraid of shadows?"

They had reached a large chestnut tree which stood alone, its white wax candles just unfolding and she turned, panting, smiling, to stand there and rest. Tibor took off the slouch hat and came near, the buttons of the tunic glinting with the amorous movement he made. Lisa took his bearded chin in her palms, then let it go with a frown of alarm.

"I believe there is some Paul Pry about, after all," she said.

TIBOR caught the thumping of her heart. All was very quiet otherwise. The moon-mist lay like smoke; the wild mint filled the nostrils fragrantly. But a branch had cracked sharply. A visible sweat broke out on Tibor's brow.

"I don't like it. It may be some enemy of your Serge, who takes me for him. He may think we have come ashore for a bit of forest love. Your Serge was



Silence seemed to emanate from her; only the incense hissed slightly as it burned.

the man with erysipelas whom you hid in the Sretinka—”

“That was my beloved Feodor—may his own good God keep him,” said Lisa very softly. . . .

She saw the red and yellow flash that sprang like a flower against the dark shield of the undergrowth and kept on blooming there. It rattled but dully, for it was near to the ground. Tibor spun and dropped, hitting her with his

flung-out arm as he went; then, right above her heart, where she had wished to be hit, there came a gaping pain and then blackness, as she too fell.

There was complete silence beneath the big chestnut tree. A breath of wind set the leaves shimmering and dropped a petal or two of the wax-candle flowers which settled upon Lisa Semenovna's red curls, as though some invisible priest bent over her. None of them troubled

Tibor, who had once been a monk in the Serguei monastery. . . .

One more dawn spreading milky mists about the honeymoon island. Heavy-uddered cows mooing unseen on their way to the *kolkhoz* byres, scent of violets and dew.

Ishbel drew it in and laughed unsteadily.

"We're still here—two of us, at least. Do you know that Lisa's gone?"

"Gone? Then those shots we heard last night—"

Ishbel put her hand to her mouth.

"Don't, Lee! It's ghastly to be so powerless and resigned, but it won't do to rub it in. I don't think Lisa would go away without mapping out beforehand how to get through. I think Sasha came for her. Yes, that would be it."

Armitage looked at the red-gold hair against the firm cheek, and turned away rather abruptly. One never knew the human reaction to any given situation till it happened.

"Another day. It's another chance for you to slip away from here."

"Into Koregorvsky's hairy arms—or Lidoshka's softer ones. We've settled it, Lee. It's old stuff, now. I only hope the stores last. We're down to bacon, canned beans and *burda*. It would be just like everything else if the real owners of the *dacha* suddenly appeared and handed us over to the village militia as thieves."

"This is Russian literature, isn't it? Dostoevsky, for preference. I tell you, the leopard doesn't change his spots. Sasha and Lisa—and this queer pickle we're in— No use blaming the Bolsheviks. It began with the Tartars some dozens of centuries ago."

"Lidoshka too; she's a hundred centuries old. We're little children of the West in her hands. . . . Go and have your swim, while I get breakfast, Lee."

A bullet might get him from the riverbank as he swam. An unidentified bullet or a posse of bottle-green police with a walletful of documents and a chorus of heel-clicks. But he enjoyed the chilling dip just as though his muscular body was destined some day to slack itself into an old man's arm-chair instead of being earmarked for something different.

HE was drying himself when the soft splash of paddles sounded, the mist shredded, and the prow of a canoe grated upon the shingle. It was Sasha the Frog who stood upright in it, and came ashore; his eyes were heavy, red-rimmed,

blued underneath with dark shadows. He sat down on the grass and rested his chin on clenched hands for several seconds before he spoke.

"Punch pops up again! You look well and clean, Comrade Feodor. Some day I will take more baths myself. Is the woman about?"

"She is cooking. Comrade Ishbel, Sasha, not the little Lisa you sent me here with. How did you get through?"

"Through?" Sasha looked up wearily. "There is nobody watching, now. And well I know that it is not little Lisa who is cooking! This is too grim a story for any woman to hear. Yet I must unburden it from my heart. *Jesu!* I thought I had more gristle. To start with, little Lisa is dead."

Armitage's hands dropped. . . . Those shots!

"She died for you. With your clothes and Comrade Ishbel's, she went ashore. There was a lemur, a cat-of-the-roofs, waiting to take her away. She put your tunic on him and so it was that beneath the moon Valentine took them for the two of you, and fired. —Ah, say nothing! I can finish now, but never could I start it again."

He gave a wan smile as he went on:

"It was all according to plan—my plan. My father was a general, curse him! Valentine shot them from the bush while they stood, inviting him—though only little Lisa knew it—beneath the big chestnut tree. In the village, they call that the *kulak* tree. It has a stout and convenient branch from which, a year or two ago, the *kulaks*, those bloated hoarders of food and money, were strung up, now and again, when the peasants grew angry. Valentine came forward to look at his victims. God knows if he meant to shoot both. I think not. There was one waiting in the branches of the *kulak* tree with a rope, according to plan. Give me a cigarette, comrade! —One who had fished a pigling out of a sty with a rope, before now. I had fixed up a rough sort of block and tackle, to help my arms. . . . He never knew the mistake he had made."

"God!" murmured Armitage involuntarily.

"And God again," said Sasha somberly. "This is a strange sort of country, comrade foreigner. But it will improve. Judge it not by any sort of propaganda for or against; it is but human."

The Frog's angel-head was low upon his chest. He was obviously dead beat and battered by all he had passed through—tough as his young hide was tanned, strange little plant of the gutters that he was. A lump came into Armitage's throat as he thought of Lisa, and he could not speak. She had thrown away her life to give Ishbel and him an extra day or two! He looked down at Sasha and tried to picture the Frog's swift vengeance, but the picture would not come. He spoke at last.

"There must be nothing more like that, Comrade Sasha. I shall go into Moscow today and give myself up to Koregorvsky."

The Frog looked up.

"Meaning that I must not get a bullet into my little behind for your sake? It is not possible. I have wits that are better protection than Koregorvsky's chain mail."

Sasha took an envelope from inside the sprigged waistcoat of a bow-windowed and *bourgeois* character that served him so generously as a coat, and handed it across.

"The Chinese woman, Lidoshka Wei, sent it," he said. "When I took her the news early this morning. Believe it or not, she is a friend. I should have told you before."

It was a plain white card of pasteboard. The writing upon it jiggled a little before Armitage's vision as he stared at it. It was Lidoshka Wei's tinkling little laugh, made manifest between his fingers.

*Admit to the Kremlin to a Conference
Dinner and Masque
of the*

*Delegates from Asia,
Comrade Ishbel Dane.
Comrade Feodor Petrovitch.*

*Two days before May Day, at 9
Babel, Organizer.*

Sasha, sunken-eyed and small, spoke again.

"I have brought back the cloak and the tunic. It was necessary. Life goes on. There is a pretty cemetery in Plavsk and Lisa will sleep there, in her native soil, after all. It might have been worse. One must not grieve too much. She was booked, with those lungs of hers, and she knew it, the darling ginger-knob."

Armitage felt his mouth tighten as he glanced down again at the pasteboard in his hand. It looked ironical, yet it must be genuine. Life went on, indeed;

it was a cataract that carried Ishbel and himself to whatever finish was appointed.

He caught the sound of Ishbel's footsteps on the shingle. She had an egg-slice in her hand, and wore a blue apron which made her look as safe and domestic as if she had just stepped out of a New York kitchenette.

"It's Sasha, isn't it? What have you there, Lee?"

She frowned at the card. A color came into her throat and then died away. Armitage knew that he meant to leave it to her. . . .

"I think we shall have to go, Lee," Ishbel said.

ON the floor, the pale and perfumed smoke rose in heavy spirals from a tiny silver brazier in which the joss-sticks burned. In motionless streaks, it hung on the air of the room, every window of which was shuttered close.

In her day Lidoshka Wei, the Little Lotus, had not burned many joss-sticks save for toilet-purposes, being of the Enlightened China. Now she watched the small glow of fire with an ivory smile, squatting before it, dressed in dark purple trousers and a white mourning jacket. On one side of her was a phonograph cabinet and a pile of records. On the other was an amber tray, in which lay three rings, heavily set with stones. These were the rings of Prohackai the Mongol, and it was Prohackai's deep, mellow voice which filled the scented room while the Little Lotus sat motionless, her eyes upon the joss-sticks, the smile never dying from her lips. As each record finished, she took it off and added it to the pile by her side.

The last record was nearly finished. But the needle stuck and Prohackai's voice became an idiotic reiteration: ". . . passed on his way, passed on his way, passed on—"

Lidoshka knocked off the sound-arm and placed the record upon the pile. There was a small hammer by the amber tray, and taking it up, she broke in half with it, one by one, each record. She did it with a ceremonial gentleness, and put the pieces back into the cabinet. The very silence which followed seemed to emanate from the Chinese girl. Only the incense hissed slightly as it burned, louder than the shut-out whisper of Moscow beyond the windows. The silk of her loose sleeve made a faint sound as she reached forward, damped out the glow of the brazier, and tilted its ashes

into a bowl. She swept up the three rings and put them into her pocket.

"Cheap—as Ishbel would say. And what an ideology!"

It was to Lidoshka-in-the-looking-glass that she spoke. She had run across the room to smile at herself in the mirror, with flame under her eyelids. Directly above the mirror hung a short sword. It was that sword which had hung above Prohackai's beheaded Buddha, and which Prohackai had named the Sword of the Future. It had been Koregorvsky's humorous whim to have it hung up in that room where he kept his Lotus Flower. He loved to kiss the tiny healed scar on Lidoshka's palm, now and again.

A CLOCK on the mantelpiece chimed eight. Lidoshka turned abruptly to stare at it, with almond eyes out of which the flame passed. She was suddenly like a playful child, working mischief. She threw open the door of an inner room, where a meal seldom seen in Moscow yet, was laid for two, with white linen and shining glasses, and a bottle or two. To the table she flitted with the scarcely perceptible limp which added grace and fascination to her movements. Gravely her hands hovered above the wine. It was a bottle of old Madeira she chose to carry to the bowl in which she had thrown the ashes of the joss-sticks. Still like a grave child, she sat and carefully uncorked it; then through a little funnel of paper, she poured some of the ashes into the bottle—ashes of the deadly deodar twig of Chol, which made excellent joss-sticks. The dark wine showed no trace of it.

Lidoshka was humming to herself as she replaced the bottle upon the table.

This time her glance at the clock had a gleam of excitement. She fluttered into the bedroom and came forth in ten minutes, jeweled and painted—one of the Asiatic women who would pour, slant-eyed and wondering, through the Kremlin gates, in an hour's time. She was seated there, sleeking back the last pomaded wisp of black hair above ivory cheekbones when the door opened.

"We must not be late," said Lidoshka.

The Deputy, her lover, dropped heavily into a chair. One glance, and Lidoshka ran to fetch wine. It was not the Madeira. Koregorvsky drank gratefully and put down the glass with a long sigh. Something had disturbed him, Lidoshka saw, with jetty eyes that melted in silence. He scowled. But the

lovesick and fatuous look came through slowly. He even rubbed his hands together, as he moved to the table.

"There'll be gold plate tonight, and goblets full of mineral-water. Madeira, eh, little portrait in enamel? I shall not drink it, this meal. I have had a shock. To start with, Valentine is dead. Tell me, did you do it?"

A sound like a startled bird came from Lidoshka. She shook her head vehemently, like an accused child.

"Very good. He's dead, all the same. He was found in the river, a score of miles out of Moscow, this morning. Faugh, why go into it? He had been strung up somewhere like a *kulak* on his own windmill, and then thrown away into the water."

"It shocks one," murmured Lidoshka. "He painted so cleverly. Do you like my ear-rings?"

The Deputy kissed the lobe of the ear nearest to him, and reached for the *salade caviare*. Then he put it down, robbed of appetite.

"It was this Feodor Armitage, this Lee Petrovitch. This Comrade Ishbel too, Lidoshka Wei. I left it to Valentine to deal with them. To be precise, I proposed a forfeit, if he failed, and he agreed—perforce. He failed, and the forfeit is paid. Why am I telling you this? I believe you are on their side."

"Certainly," said Lidoshka, tittering ever so faintly. "I have conspired with them to poison you. Won't you have some Madeira, beloved?"

"Claret. Only claret."

Koregorvsky stared at the Madeira. She soothed and hypnotized him, this Chinese woman—though his sweet terror of her had never subsided, but grew and grew, until now it was a powerful drug.

The Deputy sipped his pre-Revolution Medoc moodily. Time enough for the dinner and masque. He was growing old. There was an occasional feeling of congestion about his heart, especially after Madeira. But there were other things, worse than growing old. It was not the American architect and his woman he was thinking of. They were pawns. Never had they been anything else. One grew into the habit of finding pawns everywhere, and this modern Moscow bewildered him because it had changed so since the days of the Revolution and the Cheka. The place hummed with foreigners and he always forgot he had to be tender with them. The *Polit-bureau* had smelled out something about

the manner of Prohackai's death. The *Otdiel Gorodskavo Politcheskavo Upravlenie* had been thunderstruck by a demand from the Kremlin for details. The bureau was stiffening for a fight. A year or two ago, an arrogant refusal would have been the answer. It was an artistic tissue of lies, to be sure, that he—the Deputy—had penned. In it there was not a word of Ishbel Dane or Lee Armitage. But would it satisfy?

"It is the humanitarians, the idealists. They grow in strength. They tire of the secret police, may their eyes drop out! They think the time has come to be kind and trusting. I wish there was a Czar again. One of the Ivans gave a thousand men their lives as a thanksgiving for being cured of the itch, and withdrew the pardon when it came back again. That is the only way to govern Russia. But I am old-fashioned. What would Stalin say if he knew the cause of that scar on your hand, dear one?"

The clock chimed half-past eight. Lidoshka had thrown wide the shutters. The light of the fire-signs, though they were invisible, sent up a roseate mist to window-level. There was a crowd gathering below, to watch the progress of the Asiatic Delegates and their Muscovite hosts to the Kremlin. On two of the slender towers, just to be seen, twin red lights glowed like rubies.

"Do not be depressed," said Lidoshka solicitously. "Lidoshka feels very happy tonight for some reason. Why not you? Take more wine before we go. There will be none there."

"Madeira?" And Koregorvsky grinned himself out of his gloomy reverie. His eyes fixed themselves on the wine again. A feeling of heat and cold passed over him. He liked it. He would be drained of all emotions but for that hair-raising mixture, which never failed him when he was alone with Lidoshka Wei.

"If you wish,"—sometimes Lidoshka pouted ill-humoredly at the joke,—"but we must be going. Decide which, beloved."

"Madeira, then. . . . This sudden interest of the *Politbureau* in Prohackai makes me need something soft and warm. Do you know that Prohackai speaks at the Kremlin tonight from one of those coffin-cans where the Propaganda keep his voice? They never miss a chance. If the Little Lotus should speak too, telling all she knows!"

The glass dropped from Lidoshka's hand. It did not break on the thick



carpet. She picked it up again. Her eyes were slits of impish laughter.

"So! That is a sign to you that the Madeira is not safe."

"Pour me some!" demanded the Deputy, a thin sweat glistening at his temples. His arms went about Lidoshka from behind. She lay back in them with her enameled cheek against his, and in her outstretched hand the neck of the Madeira bottle knocked and snapped against the edge of the table. The dark and tawny liquid ran to the floor.

"It is decided," said Lidoshka carelessly. "Prohackai has not yet spoken. There is plenty of claret left."

AS the automobile which contained them crawled out of the clotted throng in Red Square through the big Spasskiya Vorota gate into the Kremlin, Koregorvsky's lean face kindled with an almost childish delight. This was the



"There was one waiting in the branches of the tree, with a rope. . . . Valentine never knew the mistake he had made."

nearest approach to the pageantry of old Russia which he had seen for many a weary day. Communist Street, that gorgeous thoroughfare within the Kremlin walls, was floodlighted regally. The explosion of color which made up its palaces and museums stood out in barbaric beauty; domes and spires raking the stars, and walls steeped in soft radiance. On the gilded cupola of the great Kremlin Palace, the Red Flag floated, doubly crimsoned by ruby lamps. The entrance to the great palace in which the dinner and masque was to be held, was a shining cave of light.

"Pretty! And how exciting to eat from the Czarist gold plate!" murmured Lidoshka. She too had the deep, soft glimmer running beneath her eyelids, again. In the entrance-hall of the palace there were many Eastern women from the far provinces, from China and India and the great tundras. Women in blue dungarees, women in brilliant sarongs. But none quite like Lidoshka Wei, once of the armies of Chang and now of the Propagandafilm and the Three Letters. . . .

"Listen!" said Koregorvsky.

It was Prohackai's voice. It came into the warm evening air. Some loud-speaker gave forth the strong, mellow tones which, for sheer, rich beauty had never been known before—a Revolutionary Chant to the Eastern Peoples.

"I weary a little of it," said Lidoshka, making a hidden and confidential grimace to the Deputy as they passed into the great palace.

The wine he had drunk was still singing through Joseph Koregorvsky's veins half an hour later. He piously thanked heaven for it, even as he took soup from a golden bowl beneath chandeliers that were like dripping blossoms chipped from an iceberg. True, it gave him that slight congestion about his heart, but it warmed up the terrified pleasure he found in Lidoshka's presence even there, where at least two thousand people, yellow, brown and white, sat in the banquet hall, in which Grand Dukes—now hangers-on at Monte Carlo—had feasted and thought their world was fixed as the pole-star. When he saw at the head of the table the famous square Georgian forehead of the man who was more powerful than any emperor in Europe, the Deputy felt sheepishly glad to be there *incognito*.

"The Masque!" Lidoshka clapped her hands softly. "What is that legend in

the God-merchants' Bible? Ah, yes—of Salome and John the Baptist. I would like to dance the part of Salome tonight. Could there be a Chinese Salome? It would be exciting to dance up to Stalin with somebody's head and tell him the story of Prohackai about which he and the *Politbureau* are so curious."

"Madcap!" said the Deputy, a little huskily. . . .

The banquet was over. The ballroom floor of the great palace shone below, bombarded by lights that changed it into a blanched lake, leaving galleries, boxes, loges and parterres all in darkness, save where the portrait of Lenin, done in a myriad red lights, glowed in a box in which the overgrown and monstrous Catherine the Great had once sat with her well-paid lovers. It was a Propaganda Masque and the performers were the artists of the Moscow ballet. Very beautiful—there were some exquisite limbs, and a Rabelaisian Japanese dragon that elicited loud shouts, ripping the darkness. But Joseph Koregorvsky felt a little stifled, short of breath.

"It is hot. I would like to steal away for a little. Is there anywhere?"

He felt Lidoshka's hand slip within his. Her perfume overpowered him with fear and delight. There was something merciless in her soft question:

"Could it be the wine?"

"Silence!" Koregorvsky snarled. He too felt the joke pall now and again.

BUT Lidoshka's warm fingers were closed on his wrist. She pulled him from the box which they alone occupied, opening the door noiselessly. There was a dimly lit gallery, and then steps, winding, thickly carpeted. The music of the masque died to a murmur, then was shut out completely behind. A Red Guard stood back to let them pass. There were more steps that set the heart bumping up to the back of his throat.

"This is Moscow," said Lidoshka Wei. "The Ivans and the Alexanders looked at it from here centuries ago. I am told that is long since in Russia; in my country it is only yesterday. Does it look good to Emperor Joseph, of the police?"

Involuntarily, Koregorvsky stepped back. They were out upon a slender balcony which spanned one of the cupolas of the palace. It seemed to be made of mere matchwood, and the wind set it singing. The girl had dragged him there. He had not wished to come so high for his fresh air, but she held him

in the grip of a Circe, tonight. Her face and neck were carved ivory against the stars. A feeling came over Joseph Koregorvsky, ludicrous in its blissful terror, that this was his last chance to save himself. To gather up this perfumed loveliness and drop it over the balcony. She was leaning her silken-sleeved arms upon the rail, gazing at the starry bowl of sky that fitted upon the unquiet lights below. It was a chance.

He put out his arms from behind to lift her—and instead, kissed her neck.

"Careful!" Lidoshka Wei threw over her shoulder. "Near where you stand the flooring is unsafe, beloved. I believe it is being restored. One could fall through."

"Was that why you brought me here, Madame Tantalus?"

Lidoshka opened a small case and put more carmine on her lips. Her laugh was all silvery amusement. She waited till the Deputy's arms were about her again.

"Why should I warn you in that case? The wine *was* poisoned—the claret, not the Madeira. Sooner or later, some such always happens to my lovers, as you know well. It is a slow poison—ashes of some incense I burn when I am bored. The reason? Because of Comrade Ishbel. It chances that I love her. I am one mass of falsehoods. My soul is gone long ago. But she shall not lose hers. The soul is more precious than any ideology. I shall watch you die, and then go into the presence of Stalin, and tell him all about Prohackai and what followed. Does it sound convincing to you?"

Koregorvsky took out his handkerchief. He dabbed his forehead with it.

"It is my fault," he said contritely. "I started it—the joke, I mean. From now on we will think out a subject for flirtation that jolts the nerves rather less, little kimono. To be sure, you can beat me at it. Shall we go back to our box? The speeches will begin soon, and we must not miss those."

There was a feeling within him that he was very drunk. He had felt that way after the attempted assassination. It might be fear, alcohol or just the strong potion that was Lidoshka. Or, indeed, it *might* be the incense ashes. . . . His brain could not think it all out. . . .

Lidoshka helped him lightly down the stairs and through the door that led from the cupola to the magnificent gallery. The lights were up. People moved

about; the Asiatic guests in all manner of polyglot dress, the Russian men in *rubashkas* with, here and there, a black silk shirt. An orchestra played. It was almost a scene of gayety.

But Joseph Koregorvsky was glad to reach his box above the ballroom floor. His hand, hairy at the wrist, pressed against his side.

"This accursed congestion—" he began, then stopped with a foolish look at Lidoshka.

The Chinese girl was looking down upon the people who moved across the ballroom floor before the speeches began. She had a way of sitting as still as a figure in a painting when she was not flitting like a butterfly. Only now a jewel at her breast flashed and dimmed with her quick breathing, and her eyes were not still. She spoke slowly.

"They have their dreams, these Eastern people—I can see them, as though they floated about over their heads. Old dreams, centuries old. The sap of a tree rises from the roots. The old roots in Russia are dead. The new ones have not yet grown. But they will—fresh, strong roots."

Koregorvsky leaned forward. A gray tinge lay about his lips, but he smiled.

"The Three Letters are part of the old roots. There is plenty of sap in them yet, and the idealists will find them too tough to chop off. As for dreams, I have none, but this makes me thirsty for the old glories. God in heaven, look down there! Who are they?"

"I believe they are Comrade Ishbel and Lee Armitage," said Lidoshka Wei, letting a faint relaxation come into her still pose. . . .

The band blared "Stenka Razin," the soft-footed men and women of the East passed behind the box, crowded over the gleaming floor below, cast shy, wondering glances at the red-draped mezzanine where the almighty *Politbureau* sat, veiled at the moment from its guests. Presently the curtain would unroll and the speeches begin.

THE Deputy spoke in a voice that was almost awed.

"They are devils, those two—or else archangels," he said.

"Why?" asked Lidoshka Wei. "When I brought them here? They are free—or will be, when the wine has acted. Could you move even so much as to go from here and order their arrest? I think not."

"That joke!" He faltered, craned over to look below again and stayed still, glancing down at the hand clenched against his chest, as though it belonged to somebody else. Lidoshka's face, the exquisite mask of a wrecked soul, came round slowly to look at him. In the long eyes lay merciless amusement and eternal weariness.

"The joke is finished. I meant it to finish in the gutter that night Lisa Semenovna shot at you, outside the opera. It was a fit place to end, and I tried hard. This is as good, perhaps. I shall take Ishbel and Lee Armitage to Stalin and the *Politbureau* as soon as you have died—beast of a past generation, for whom I killed Prohackai! Madeira! That was the best joke of all.

It was the claret. Or perhaps Lidoshka Wei is mistaken. She is such a tissue of lies. . . . Ashes of the Chon Deodar, beloved."

The box had red curtains, red-carpeted floor, scrolled and gilded walls. Past it sprawled a banner-sign in Russian and Chinese that shut out most of the vibrant light of the ballroom, and most of its sound. The door was padded with velvet. But it creaked a little on its hinges. Slowly it opened, and slowly Lidoshka came to her feet, facing it, facing the two persons who entered.



It was a Propaganda Masque; the performers were artists of the ballet. There was a



Rabelaisian dragon that elicited loud shouts.

"Close the door, please," she said.

It was Ishbel Dane and Lee Armitage who stood there. They were hand in hand. To the still figure in the chair, the man addressed himself.

"I've come to give myself up, Koregorvsky," Lee Armitage said. Ishbel smiled at him as he spoke and, though she was pale, her voice was very steady. To the Chinese girl she looked as tall and slender as a young poplar.

"Thanks for the invitation and the safe conduct here, Lidoshka. I've helped Lee to hide since he escaped, and before that. I don't intend to have anything whatever to do with the secret police. I know all about Prohackai's death and the fact that Lee Armitage the American architect is still alive. If I am set free I shall certainly not hold my tongue about it. So—shall I put myself in your charge?"

"Koregorvsky!" Armitage bent down swiftly, his voice louder.

"He will not speak," said Lidoshka. "Prohackai has spoken instead, I think, at last."

HER white hands supported her against the wall of the box. She drooped a little from exhaustion, and flickered a timid, childish look at Ishbel, a look which once again extinguished all scorn and hatred. Ishbel, too, felt exhaustion. How tired she was! She sat down and listened to the hot murmur that surged all outside the box. A loud-speaker had started. Not Prohackai, thank God. . . .

"Do you see, Ishbel? There is no Koregorvsky, now."

Armitage looked down at the unmoving bald head and then to the Chinese girl. He felt far beyond anything but harsh amusement. He said slowly:

"Another name on your funeral list, Lidoshka? Nearly as well stage-managed as the last, too."

Lidoshka looked back at him out of the eternally weary crescents of her eyes. She gathered up her long sleeves, and shook them.

"It was fear," she said. "He drank it, bathed in it. It was poisoned wine to him, but he would drink it. His heart could not stand it. Prohackai spoke. . . . You are my prisoners, Ishbel Dane and Lee Armitage. Will you come with me?"

The Man of a Thousand Legends sat at a baize-covered table on the mezzanine above the ballroom of the grand palace, in a straight-backed deal chair. He drummed thick fingers upon the manuscript of his speech which lay before him. A peasant-shaped, powerful, ungainly man, a man of the background, in drab uniform—an Eastern monarch from the Caucasus, deeply concerned for his people's happiness, and guiding them with an iron and merciless hand toward that happiness, whether they wished it or not. . . .

A curtain veiled the mezzanine from the ballroom. The warm sounds which

came from the other side bored the man and made him feel nervous, that was obvious. He had no sense of theater. The dinner had been an ordeal. He sat embodied in himself, a peasant-king who spoke no language but his own, who believed in no kingdom but his own, and would picture no other sort of world.

"How long?"

"They will pull aside the curtain in five minutes."

He relapsed into himself again, sat hunched a little in the chair. There was nothing courtier-like in the half-dozen men about him, though he had the power of Charlemagne, made secure by his brain instead of by a sword.

Presently he turned his heavy head. It was one of his Armenian secretaries, who had noiselessly entered the mezzanine.

"The Chinese woman who was the wife of Prohackai demands to see you, Comrade Stalin. I told her 'No,' but she would not take the answer. With her, she has two Americans."

"This Lidoshka Wei of Koregorvsky's office?" The question was guttural and indifferent on the surface.

"The same." The secretary looked down at his nails for a moment. "She says it concerns the Prohackai affair."

A rustle passed across the members of the *Politbureau*. One member adjusted his *pince-nez* nicely. Obviously there was interest; a little discreet bristling.

"We will listen to her."

STALIN did not look round as Lidoshka Wei entered. Nor for a moment, when she stood there, did he look at the man and woman who accompanied her. But there was curiosity in the only thing Oriental about him, his limpid eyes.

"It is very important," said Lidoshka. She made no Eastern obeisance. Her voice was toneless, colorless.

"Proceed. There is five minutes. You are in the presence of the *Politbureau*."

"I am Lidoshka Wei, of Koregorvsky's office. Prohackai the Mongol was my husband, and I killed him. It was according to the instructions of the office, because he was false to the State. Since I was a child, I have obeyed instructions. It was made to appear that his death was natural. This man is Lee Armitage, the American architect. Because he knew the death was otherwise, he also was made to disappear. This woman is Ishbel Dane, also an American. She hid Lee Armitage, when he escaped from

sentence of death. I will make a sworn statement, Comrade Stalin. But they must both go free."

"We do not punish the innocent in Russia, except by mistake—as I believe they sometimes do in the Capitalist countries also." A grave nod at Lee Armitage, and then a glacial smile. "The documents are all before us. The matter is marked for prompt dealing. Is there time to see Comrade Koregorvsky at the moment?"

IT was Lidoshka who answered, like a fragile piece of waxwork that spoke in a waxwork's voice, as detached and mechanical.

"Koregorvsky is not available. He has just died."

The man drummed his manuscript again. He frowned at the dramatic silence of the men about him, hating all drama. To him, life was one huge portfolio of manuscripts, which one never finished planning and writing. Sometimes it took years of labor to construct a single page, and then perhaps it must be torn out. Some of the *Politbureau*, he recollected, said that the Three Letters must be torn out, or at least greatly changed. Perhaps so.

On the other side of the curtain, the music began to throb out the "Internationale." The big fingers flicked the manuscript pages.

"An outrageous mistake. One of our great vices in Russia is overdone zeal, you understand. The matter will be looked into in great detail." The dark eyes enveloped Lidoshka curiously again. "These two are free, from now—if there is a pen, I will sign the order instantly. An outrageous mistake! Koregorvsky's department shall be remodeled, if not abolished. The Prohackai affair shall be the reason."

"The curtain is ready, Comrade Stalin."

Ishbel and Lee Armitage found themselves in the corridor behind the mezzanine. A great surge of noise told that the curtains had parted and the man was on his feet. One of the secretaries came forth and passed them with a respectful salutation. The mighty machine which would deal with the Prohackai affair was already being set in motion. Perhaps the battle was joined, though not one sound of it might reach outside the underground political arena.

Ishbel became conscious that she leaned against some fluted pillar that

soared up to the vaulted and unseen roof. She saw Lee Armitage's face as through a mist, and he was smiling, although as exhaustedly as she knew her own answering smile was. It was hard to believe that the brief interview they had passed through had any roots in fact. Hard to realize what a stroke of the pen had done. She caught a waft of fragrance, and saw that Lidoshka Wei stood beside her, smiling wistfully.

"It is all over, Ishbel."

Ishbel nodded. Slowly realization crystallized. Her brain moved too slowly yet. She said nothing because there were no words to say, but the almond eyes she looked into brimmed over and swam with light.

"Thank you," Lidoshka whispered. "Ah, thanks, dear Ishbel! It was hard to have your hatred for so long."

"I never understood, Lidoshka. How could I? And what will become of you now?"

"Of Lidoshka? Did not I tell you there was only her shell left? But the bird of contentment nests in unexpected branches."

Mystic with the enigma of centuries was the faint smile that passed across her lips. Often Ishbel had seen it and wondered. The Chinese girl turned and moved slowly down the wide marble corridor. The electric bracket-lamps spread pools of light among the shadows, and a white hand waved in one of them. It was farewell.

THE floodlights still beat radiantly upon the gate of the Kremlin which had once been called the Gate of the Redeemer. The frescoes to which men had bared their heads for centuries were still there, grave and beautiful.

The two Americans passed out into the Square. The crowd had gone, and it was quiet and empty. But somewhere hydraulic drills clattered like the machine-guns of old, taking up the old cobbles to be replaced by the smooth, shining wooden floor of modern civilization.

"We're utterly safe, Lee, I believe," said Ishbel. "Moscow is the safest city in the world—for us."

"We'll leave it soon, all the same," said Armitage. He stopped and took both her hands, there beneath the Iberian Virgin.

"Run away from it!" said Ishbel with a laugh that caught under her breath; then after a long silence: "Come back

later, perhaps—when they get a smaller watchdog.”

“You’re crying a bit. Not lost dreams? Dreams are never lost, Ishbel. They vanish and come back wiser and stronger. Dreams don’t have to be kept in steel incubators. That’s the trouble here—yet, anyway. We were unlucky. We got shut up in one.”

Somewhere a loud-speaker sounded: Stalin to the Asiatic Delegates, being relayed upon the air of Moscow. Where the sound emanated, a giant fire-sign ran up and down the wall in yellow flame, fluffed out to blackness, blazed in again, with a never-ending rhythm. A chill rippled through Lee Armitage.

“I wonder what tale that Proletarian outside my rooms will tell tomorrow morning about the sensational return to life of the *Amerikanka* architect? Some convincing sort of blurb. God, what energy and what tireless enthusiasm! Fighting toward the light. Remolding the world nearer to the heart’s desire, as you once said, Ishbel—though it may break in the mold. Struggling in lies ten miles deep—their own lies, their enemies’ lies. Yes, we need a rest.” He smiled whimsically. “They’ll want me to carry on with the Asiatic Palace, above poor Prohackai’s bones. Nothing doing, I’m afraid.”

They were both silent a while. The telephones would be ringing in the great GPU Building. The net which had been spread for them would be being reduced to harmless string again. The camouflage would already be in process of manufacture. And underneath, the blades of the *Politbureau* and the Three Letters would have clashed.

THE air was soft and fresh, after the heat of the day. Reaction beat in their veins. The sharp reality of the stars and the fragrant night was very sweet. Ishbel thought of Lidoshka and Lisa Semenovna. The stars shone over Moscow. The immortal soul was the same everywhere.

A figure, apparently materializing from the wall, came swaggering along the pavement in the glow of the fire-sign. It stopped to pull a loose nail out of one of its over-large shoes and throw it away.

“Sasha!”

“The same,” said Sasha, grinned and saluted. “So all was *okaypartner* at the Kremlin?”

“All okay, partner!”

“The Chinese woman assured me it would be. I hung round to make sure. I am of a curious disposition. Along with my father, it is my curse. I call myself the *Noseyparker* of Moscow. See how my English progresses! They say there is none unemployed in this country. But I am at a loose end, now you are no longer in peril, Comrade Feodor. What is next on the *agenda*?”

“I think we go back to America soon, little Frog.”

“There is no accounting for tastes,” said Sasha.

ISHBEL caught his lovely head in her arm, though he tried shyly to wriggle free.

“Won’t you come too, Sasha—you and Maria Vassilissa? There’s a great house, a garden and the sea. You’ll get strong—as a horse.”

“The horse is not born and bred in a rabbit-burrow,” said the Frog politely. “It is a Capitalist offer, made in good faith as, I am assured, Capitalist offers can be, on rare occasions. To tell you the truth, I am also afraid of the police in America. Also, the Depression kills one off quickly, I am told.” Sasha shook his head vehemently. “Ah, no, I stay in Moscow. The clinics and the schools will make me strong. I swear I shall go to them soon and stay—if I like it. Maria Vassilissa and I are of the future. We shall meet you in the sweet by-and-by, and you will not know us!”

Sasha took off his astrakhan cap. Lee Armitage also doffed his. His throat tightened. There was no tangible way of showing the gratitude he felt. The Frog was as remote, as mysterious as Lidoshka. One could offer neither two dollars nor a kingdom, to Puck.

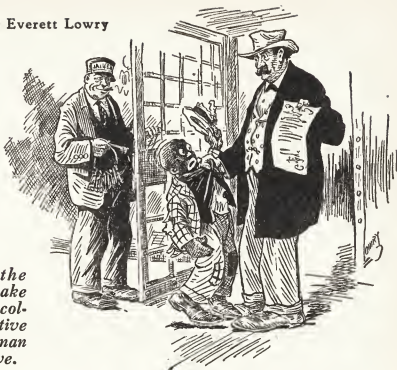
Sasha kissed both his cheeks ceremoniously.

“Blood brothers, comrade!” he said. “Always remember—and your blood and mine are not so very different.”

He whistled softly as he sauntered away, but the sound wobbled and died. A Red soldier by the Iberian Virgin looked after him suspiciously. The fire-sign flicked about him for a moment and then the long lighted streets took him to themselves again.

There was a stir of sound, high up against the stars. The clocks had begun to play the Funeral March of the Revolution. A street-car clanked dully. . . . The fire-sign blinked out for the night.

Illustrated by Everett Lowry



*Wherein the
police mistake
a highly col-
ored detective
for a one-man
crime wave.*

Jail-house Jeopardy

By ARTHUR K. AKERS

WITH siren screaming and loud-speaker blaring, the full staff of the Columbus Collins Detective Agency, for Colored, shot uproariously through startled streets, *en route* to a crime.

Clinging madly to their radio-equipped motorcycle rode the five-foot, frog-eyed "Bugwine" Breck, assistant sleuth, his overalls flapping perilously in the wind. Doubled like an overlong jack-knife in the "bathtub" side-car of the machine, Columbus Collins shouted frantically but fruitlessly at his aide. Bugwine had the bit in his teeth and a cry for aid in his ears, and he wasn't listening!

"Old rad-dio workin' jest like de white-folks po-lice's!" exulted Mr. Breck as he took a corner and the side-car took up aviation. "Us chasin' de crook widout even waitin' for de call: hears de crime while it's happenin'!"

Which claim Bugwine's loud-speaker instantly backed up. From it issued sounds of anguish unparalleled in tone and timbre, agonized and awful in their

implications. Beyond any doubt, murder was being done!

"Hold eve'ything! Bugwine Breck, de human bloodhound, ridin' to de rescue!" yelled the agency's junior partner excitedly to an evident victim of foulest play as he opened yet wider the straining throttle.

But, instead of speed, there followed a series of coughs, wheezes, and mechanical hiccoughs that died feebly into silence. Even the radio was momentarily hushed. Then through it came a new voice, mellifluously stating: "The hog-calling contest to which you have just been listening, ladies and gentlemen, has come to you through the courtesy of the Lehman Pork Packing Company, from the UBC studios of the Metropolitan Broadcasting Company in Birmingham. When next you hear the note of the gong—"

"Uh-huh! Uh-huh!" the croak of Columbus in his disgust cut in upon the distant announcer. "Out of gas again, aint you! Also, out of brains! Gits a

hawg-callin' audition on de rad-dio, and thinks you's listenin' to a murder some-whars!"

"Sound like a murder to me!" defended Mr. Breck embarrassedly.

"Aint matter how it sound to you:

"Hold eve'thing! Bugwine Breck de human bloodhound, ridin' to de rescue."

"You jest like a cur-dawg," Columbus forthwith moved to keep down the swelling of pride in his little assistant's chest.

"—Forgit to kick you once, and you starts thinkin' you is in good and regular standin' at de dinner-pan! I is de brains around here; you aint nothin' but de egg! And how about dat pawnshop you gits half-witted and buys from Frisco for us yest'day, wid all de agency's money?"

"Po-lice was fixin' git him for buyin' stolen goods—"



it's how it sound to de hawg, dat counts! But now you done made a fresh mess out yo'self, right out in de open; jest when de Afro-Mexican Law and Order League fixin' to decorate us tomorrer, too!"

Mr. Breck's face blackened still further, if possible. Junior partners always heard everything last. "How-come *decorate*?" he queried, puzzled.

"For de swell record de agency makes for law and order, dat what! Course, it aint nothin' but a accident—you all time fallin' over de right crook while you is chasin' de *wrong* one. But de agency git de credit for bein' bright in de brains because I is. Now dey pins medals on us, in de lodge-hall, wid all de women lookin' at me. Eve'ything be classy but you!"

Bugwine dizzied. Old spotlight was fixing to fall right on a boy!

"So you wants 'em git *me*, instead, is you?"

"Sho was cheap, he had to leave town so quick, and—"

"Which takes keer of eve'ything exceptin' what I gwine do wid a pawnshop."

"Heap of things a detective needs in a pawnshop," defended Mr. Breck obstinately. "—Like dem burglar-tools I gits myself out de stock, to use in place de crowbar for pryin' out evidence after dis."

He moved sharply, to dodge Columbus' kick—and brought up a fresh sore sub-

ject, one prompted by the sudden clinking sound emitted from his overalls as he moved.

"Uh-huh! Still carryin' around dem knives and forks and spoons wid you, too!" his superior seized on it.

"Long as I rooms wid you, I is!" mumbled Bugwine morosely. "Skeered to leave 'em lyin' round loose whar you is. So carries 'em in my pants between meals, alongside de bear-trap handcuffs and de burglar-tools for evidence-gittin'."

"Don't mess up my time tellin' *me* how you's half-witted!" snorted Columbus. "Stand hitched now while I arranges credit for a couple quawts gas, to git home wid. You done busted de agency flat, buyin' pawnshops us aint need."

But refueling seemed but fresh license for Bugwine to go wrong. Scarcely had the motorcycle sputtered into life again when Chauffeur Breck, in frenzied efforts to avoid a dog, crashed noisily into the side of a parked flivver of uncertain vintage and ownership.

"Now look at you!" raved Mr. Collins. "Dodgin' a two-bits hound and ruins a fifty-dollar car!"

"Ruint *whose* car?" Mr. Breck was too busy untangling his neck from his bed-spring aerial, into which he had been thrown, to get all the dismal details at once.

BUT his question was practically instantly answered, by the emergence from an adjacent speak-easy of a weazened, boat-footed little darky with blood in his eye. "Half-portion" Williams proved to be his name.

"—And don't nobody move nothin' twel de damages is settled!" Mr. Williams concluded a long prelude to more trouble for Bugwine Breck.

"Ugh-oh! Dat boy been run into before!" foreboded Mr. Collins to Mr. Breck.

"Three bucks to uncrumple dem fenders," estimated the outraged Half-portion, "—in my hands, now, or I calls de cops!"

Mr. Breck's personal tremblings indicated antipathy for jail-houses—and absence of three dollars.

"Jest when I was fixin' to drive over to Genesee too!" Mr. Williams thought of more grief. "Looks like about three-fifty now—"

Columbus glared down at the cause of tuggings at his coat tail, to find a gray-gilled and gulping Bugwine urging

hoarsely: "Slip him de three, Columbus, before de prices goes up."

"Us aint *had* no three bucks since you buys me dat pawnshop!"

"Den stand back and le' *me* talk to him!" Desperation was about to make a diplomat. Then, to Half-portion, "Us always comes clean, but aint got no three bucks, so us gives you five—"

Columbus' instant grip on the spend-thrift Bugwine's windpipe was timely but too late: Half-portion had heard.

"Unchoke de boy!" directed Mr. Williams in new interest. "He listens better'n you."

"—in *trade*," Mr. Breck wheezed and whistled the rest of his remark.

"Choke him some more, right where you left off!" Half-portion reversed himself. "He commencin' to sound like a wrong number again! What kind of *trade*?"

"Us is detectives," Mr. Breck loosened his collar for more air and ideas.

"What I want wid no detective?" Half-portion seemed determined to get back on a cash basis.

"Boy wid a car never know what he gwine need," Bugwine drew on personal experience. "Us fully equipped wid radio, bloodhound, and burglar-tools. Clients is all lousy wid sa'sfaction. Medals us both, tomorrer, at de Law and Order League."

"Is I cain't git cash, takes service," surrendered Mr. Williams ungraciously. "For de next time I gits in a jam. Now, all you gape-faced boys, rally round! Shove off! Genesee, here I comes!"

"Now you *is* done sewed yo'self up in a mess!" criticised Columbus harshly as they watched the latest victim of Bugwine's dumbness depart. "*Some* day you gwine git yo'self in a jam what'll sprain even *my* brains gittin' you out!"

But, "Maybe dat boy aint never need no service, den us done saved three bucks," Mr. Breck leaned heavily toward the only perceptible optimism in the situation.

"Yeah, and maybe he git in a jail-house somewhar for burglary, bigamy, and caught wid de goods. Wid *you* done made us liable for servicin' him out!"

SCARCELY had Columbus got his scow-sized feet hoisted to the agency's table that afternoon, building up his strength for the morrow's arduous public medal-presentation ceremonies, when a bombshell was dropped upon him, by a messenger.

"Long-distance tryin' git you boys on de barber-shop phone!" panted the entering boy-of-all-work from the near-by Sweet Papa tonsorial parlors.

"Ugh-oh!" Columbus' feet and spirits hit the floor together. "I bet dat's Half-po'tion! And got hisself in jail some-whars far-off, jest to collect dat service!"

Mr. Breck re-cached personal table-silver that he had been suspiciously and ostentatiously inventorying in a corner, and moved to accompany his chief.

"Stay here and tune up de motorcycle," Columbus disappointed him. "Aint no tellin' whar you got to go."

SO it was the agency's head-man himself who was led skittishly to the telephone—and fresh trouble.

"Dis here de Columbus Collins detectin' agent?" inquired a thin voice from afar off as the great sleuth lifted the receiver gingerly.

"Aint nobody else but!" Mr. Collins failed relievedly to recognize the caller. "A criminal wid eve'y case. Us smells 'em out whar others jest sniffs about. Us aims—"

"Nemmind de sales-talk!" interrupted the distant one urgently. "I got a option on yo' services now. Craves action, quick. Dis here Half-po'tion talkin'—from Genesee."

"What kind service?" Mr. Collins cooled quickly. Instead of a new case, here was a dead horse being presented by long-distance telephone, for him to pay for! Bugwine's horse, at that!

"Drives over here and parks my car," came the distressing details. "Only I aint see de fire-plug. Now dey's a ticket on my steerin'-wheel say for me to see de judge or else de jail about it."

Columbus re-inflated. "Dat all? Why, dat aint *nothin'* to big detectin'-boys like us. Jest sends my 'sistant, Mist' Breck, over to mop up after you and make it look better; but all you got do is work fast now—gallop yourself over to de police station and—"

"And git locked up?"

"Naw!"

"Old ticket say dat: pay up or lock up—"

"*Forgit* de ticket! You aint know nothin' *about* no ticket, I tells you. What you gallops for is to make haste and report your car's been stole—"

"*Stole?*"

"From some other place whar you says you left it. So, when de po-lice finds it dey gits so swelled up from

thinkin' how good dey is dey thinks it's de crook dat left it by dat fire-plug—not you—and tears up de ticket. Aint dat square us wid you, too? Collins is de name, and brains is de trade-mark! And Bugwine Breck comin' along to help find de thief, make eve'ything look regular and like it *had* been stole."

On Mr. Collins' triumphant return from the telephone he found his aide anxiously astride the motorcycle, its motor roaring and loud-speaker volleying cooking-recipes to a heedless world.

"Shet off eve'ything and listen!" Columbus snapped testily. "Half-po'tion's got hisself in a jam in Genesee, jest like I allows. I done told him what to do twel you gits dar. He's reportin' to de po-lice over dar dat his car's been stole. Yo' job is to git over to Genesee and act like you's helpin' to find it. Outside of dat, de less you knows de more you aint gum-up. Now ride fast—git dar before yo' gas gives out!"

"How I git back?" Mr. Breck betrayed unusual forethought.

"Dat yo' worries: let Half-po'tion tow you back. But be here for de big medal-pinnin' tomorrow: de *full* agency force before de *full* League meetin', de word say. I aint aim to keep de women waitin'."

Two hours later, mouth, muffler, and throttle wide open, Detective Breck roared into the strange town of Genesee. Roared to its outskirts, that is, where familiar symptoms suddenly developed. Cough, hiccough, and wheeze signalized that again he was out of gas—and Demopolis fifty miles away.

"Brains, rally round!" Mr. Breck addressed that drooping organ. "Gas-tank and cash-drawer both empty. Columbus all time bellowin' about he brains; us show him brains on de half-shell! Pull a business-deal wid de gasoline-gent'-man!"

FOLLOWING which confident preliminaries, the visiting sleuth tooled his motorcycle by hand into a near-by filling-station, so plastered with No CREDIT signs that a boy couldn't make out what brand of gas they sold, even could he read, which Bugwine couldn't. "Cap'n," he hailed a misanthropic-appearing attendant, "craves gallon of gas. Pays up Sat'day."

"No credit, no security—no gas!" summarized the misanthrope firmly.

Mr. Breck sat down heavily, and moved his lower jaw out of his lap.

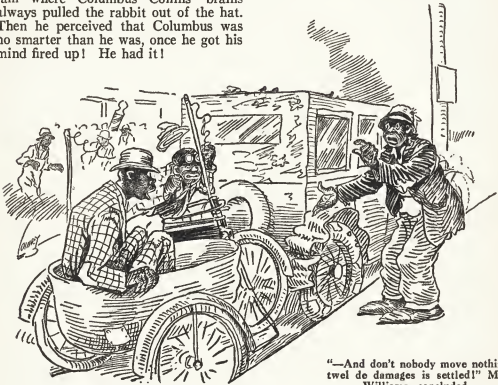
"Mean I cain't git no gas?" he checked up on his ears—and the distance from Demopolis.

"Not unless you give me something for security, till you pay. I've been stung by experts."

Bugwine began to catch up on his head-scratching; this was the sort of jam where Columbus Collins' brains always pulled the rabbit out of the hat. Then he perceived that Columbus was no smarter than he was, once he got his mind fired up! He had it!

he ruined his riding! Now he had gas but no machine—brains had slipped up somewhere right while he was bragging on them, leaving him nothing to do but walk. There was even a law about hitch-hiking in this section.

With his spirits and the seat of his



"—And don't nobody move nothin' twel de damages is settled!" Mr. Williams concluded.

"Cap'n," he reopened negotiations with a strut, "how 'bout de motorcycle for de security?"

The filling-station man looked at it. "Not a drop over two gallons, though," he capitulated uncertainly.

"Dat plenty!" crowed Mr. Breck. Business was easy when you mixed brains with it!

But with the two gallons duly injected, a new element entered. The filling-station gentleman produced a chain and lock. "—And you get your motorcycle back as soon as you pay off for the gas," he assured a Bugwine who was displaying sudden symptoms of having been struck by lightning.

"Means I cain't ride de motorcycle no more?" stuttered the little sleuth fogily.

"Not till you pay for the gas!"

Bugwine staggered dizzily. Old big business-deal had back-fired in a boy's face! When he hocked his motorcycle,

pants practically dragging the ground, Mr. Breck took up the black man's burden, toward Genesee's business and legal center. But suddenly and in mid-shuffle there came proof that you couldn't keep a good man down. If winter came, spring *wasn't* far behind! Bugwine was good! Before him stood the proof. He had come to Genesee to locate a stolen car—and there it was! Parked by a fire-hydrant, glaringly pointing out not only the blindness of the Genesee minions of the law, but the fundamental superiority of the Bugwinian brain. No wonder the Law and Order League was going to decorate him tomorrow! He rated it—even if usually by accident.

With a clink of silverware and clank of other accouterments, Mr. Breck moved toward what was unmistakably Half-portion's car. It should be moved from in front of that hydrant; already there was a tag on it about something. Helpfully Bugwine climbed into the front

seat, fumbled with the ignition—and looked up to face two large and suspicious policemen. Behind them, Half-portion himself hovered nervously.

"Well?" This one-word interrogation of the Law said a disturbing mouthful.

Startled, Bugwine leaped like a fawn, and failed thereby to make a favorable impression.

"Where you think you're starting with it?" Things got worse.

"J-j-jest movin' it away—"

"Yeah. Jest movin' it out of the county, you mean!"

"You tell 'em who I is, Half-po'tion!" Mr. Breck appealed frantically to his client.

But the goggle-eyed Mr. Williams had his own rear to protect, his own lie to make stick. "I aint never seen dis boy before in my life, Cap'n," he protected it earnestly.

The Law seemed to make a decision. "This little crook," it ran, "left the car here—scared or something; then came back for it. And we caught him! Tear up the ticket, Joe; we want him for worse, it looks like. Car-stealing's getting too damn' frequent—"

MR. BRECK'S gibberings drowned the rest. Where was Columbus? Where were his brains? Anguish filled his soul and distorted his face.

"Well, you got anything to say for yourself?" the officer was demanding harshly. "Come clean or come to jail, is the way *your* business stacks up!"

"It's a detective," gurgled the disem-barking Mr. Breck wildly. "Jest look-in' for dis car—"

"Detective? Show me!"

Bugwine leaped for the loophole. His badge! Pinned inside his overalls, it would save him. Frantically he fumbled at his buttons—and his regular brand of luck resumed business at the old stand! For as he flipped back his garment there cascaded and clattered damningly to the sidewalk about his feet six forks, two spoons, and a silver knife!

Instantly and justifiably the Law jumped to fresh conclusions. "What the— Hold everything!" Heavy hands clamped down on the shrinking and horrified Mr. Breck. "Where'd you get all this table-stuff, huh?"

"H-hit's mine!" wailed a Bugwine who no longer believed himself, in the face of this.

"Yours?" Skepticism thickened the plot and atmosphere.

"Yas suh. Carries 'em in my pants between meals—so de crook I rooms wid cain't swipe 'em. He my partner in detectin'—"

"Yeah. . . . *That* kind of detective! Well, looks to us like you need looking into in a big way. Come on!"

Mr. Breck started, stumbled—and another angle to his predicament caught him for a *solar plexus*: Tomorrow he was due to be decorated for distinguished service to Law and Order. . . . And tomorrow he would be in jail!

Then Bugwine's business took a sudden turn—and grew much worse. Beginning with a remark of the hitherto glumly silent smaller officer: "If he shed all *that* just from unbuttoning his jumper, why not frisk him good and get a real line on him?"

What followed produced a cry of triumph from the Law, one of soul-sickened dismay from Mr. Breck.

"Burglar-tools!" The big policeman lifted them aloft excitedly. "First we find the silverware; and *now* we find how you got it! *Detective*, eh? You're no detective, boy! You're a one-man crime wave!"

"Looked like a crook to *me*, first time I sees him!" By going far enough back, Mr. Williams found he could cap the climax cannily with the truth. "But I's sa'sfied about de car: I got it back. What y'all does wid him about de burglary, dat aint none my business."

This statement found merit. "I was aiming to go to Mobile next week; keeping down my court-cases all I can, on that account," hesitated the big cop. "What say we let the car-stealing slide then, and just jug him till we can find out where he's wanted for burglary: let *them* try him, and we're satisfied with the reward?"

"I couldn't have thought up a better scheme myself!" the little officer concurred. "Come on, boy, and look over our jail!"

IN front of the dingy frame building that housed the Collins agency in Demopolis two hours later, the battered car of a somewhat shamefaced Half-portion again shivered and shimmied to a halt.

"Sees you gits yo' car back, all right, Mist' Williams. Our service never fails—a criminal wid eve'y case!" Columbus emerged in relief to garner the details. "Whar-at Bugwine?"

"In de jail-house—"

"In de jail-house?" Goose-flesh sprang

There cascaded and clattered damagingly to the sidewalk about his feet six forks, two spoons, and a silver knife.



up all over Mr. Collins. He knew Bugwine! And tomorrow was the big medalling! "—How-come?" he demanded. "What for?"

"Starts wid burglary, fugitive from jestice, and impersonatin' a officer—aint hear all of it."

"Burglary?"

"Of a whole mess of knifes and forks and spoons what come dribblin' down on de sidewalk around him while he tryin' to talk hisself out of stealin' de car. But what ruint him was de *burglar-tools* dey gits off him when dey frisks him."

"Burglar-tools!" groaned Mr. Collins despairingly. "Right when de Law and Order League fixin' decorate us for up-holdin' de law, *Bugwine* got to git hisself jailed for bein' all broke out wid burglar-tools!"

"Maybe," hazarded Mr. Williams, softened by such wretchedness, "you can bail him?"

"Cain't *git* bail for all he's hung on hisself—de half-wit!" howled Mr. Collins. "Besides, he done broke us, buyin' pawnshops, and—"

Once more the barber-shop boy interrupted. "Long-distance callin' you again, Mist' Collins," he paid tribute to prominence, "and say: Is you gwine pay for de call?"

"Is dey git paid for it, I is. But got

to charge it to de shop first. Dat's Bugwine!"

Columbus' fears proved well-founded. It was Bugwine. And his plea was high-keyed and hoarse as he begged for bail, *habeas corpus*, anything connected with freedom. "—And, besides, I aint got no gas to git home, is I git out," he recalled the recent horrible mishap at the filling-station.

"Well," his chief rasped coldly, "*your* brains done git you *in* de jam, now let 'em git you out! How I gwine bail you, when you done spent all our money for pawnshops, huh?"

"Pesters 'bout dat after I gits loose!" rejoined Mr. Breck hysterically. "Hold-in' me here twel finds out whar I does my burglin', den gwine send me dar to try, dey say, unless you does somep'n! Liable send me so fur off I cain't never git back!"

"Been better for me, is you aint never here to start wid!"

"Wasn't for me, makin' all dem successes by mistake, you wouldn't git no medals on de agency tomorrer," reminded Bugwine tearfully.

It was a bad idea; Columbus had momentarily forgotten *that*, under the landslide of fresh disasters.

"Look here, runt," he rose to the point. "You de boy what stirred de Law and

Order League up about dem medals. I cain't do nothin' for you, broke like you done broke us; but is you let me and de League in for de hawss-laugh by you bein' in de jail-house when time comes to medal de agency for upholdin' de law, tomorrer, it'll be jest *too bad*—for you! I'll run you so fur when you *does* git loose it'll cost your mamma nine dollars jest for de report-charge on whar is you!"

Return to the dingy precincts of his agency uncovered for the overwrought Mr. Collins a fresh reminder of his firm's plight, in the person of a visitor—the Hill's biggest and busiest bootlegger. "Evenin', Mist' Collins!" that worthy greeted him. "As president de Afro-Merican Law and Order League, I comes by to rehearse your Mr. Breck for de big medal-pinnin' ceremony tomorrer, on you-all in de lodge-room. Decorates for decorum, and conspicuous service to de public rec'titude. Whar he?"

"Bugwine in j—uh—off in Genesee, wrastlin' wid de law," Columbus caught himself.

"All time upholdin' de law: dat's Mr. Breck!" approved the president pompously. "He'll be back tomorrer in time, of co'se?"

"Cain't hardly keep him dar *today*," Mr. Collins improved with practise.

"You see," worried the president, "us is got Mr. Breck down to make de speech acceptin' de medals in behalf de agency. Tell him about half hour be plenty long enough—"

"Bugwine big believer in short sentences," Columbus continued to overwork his double meanings.

DEPARTURE of the official but made Columbus worse company for himself—unanswerable facts bit the deeper. To call off the impending ceremony because the honored hound-of-the-law was in jail for a list of offenses reading like the index to the Alabama Criminal Code, was impossible! Yet so was getting Bugwine free in time. And, even if free, he was out of gas and funds. Only under cover of darkness—tonight's darkness—could his disgrace to the Collins agency be averted. With no way of appearing, and Genesee fifty miles away.

Remorselessly the big clock on the wall ticked toward medalling-time—and exposure—while its chief flexed fingers that yearned for the throat of Mr. Breck between them. Columbus' tormented glance took in again and again barbecue-

stands that he was too poor to patronize; the pawnshop, the purchase of which had thus impoverished him; and the more remote locality of the City Hall, with its flanking jail, the fountain-head of local law and order— Then Columbus stood up, startled; through the imminent laughter, long and loud, of Baptist Hill at his pending personal and professional downfall, he had heard a new note—dim and far, but— Suddenly, Mr. Collins leaped heavily from his chair, blinked, seized his hat, and was off madly, as one inspired, in the enveloping darkness.

IN the Genesee lock-up, a luckless Bugwine played "Jail-house Blues" endlessly on his mouth-organ, and eyed the perfection of circumstantial evidence enmeshing him. End-to-end, he estimated lugubriously, his sentences would total the life-expectancy of a healthy elephant. This, he further reflected, would be plenty soon enough, to get out, at that—giving Columbus time to cool down about killing him for ruining that Law-and-Order ceremony tomorrow.

Down the jail corridor came the jailer, jingling his keys. Bugwine stiffened. Maybe a miracle had happened! The keeper paused before his cell-door, and Mr. Breck brightened further. He began to crease his overalls collegiately down the trouser-legs with thumb and finger, preliminary to restoration to circulation. . . . Then his jaw fell; there was a strange white gentleman with this keeper, and he was getting out handcuffs!

"Right in here, he is," the jail turn-key was pointing out Mr. Breck to the stranger. "And you understand, of course, we claim the rewards."

Rewards? Plural? Bugwine blanched to a light coal-color.

"Come on, you!" growled the new white-folks firmly. "You're going for a little ride before you take a long one. Want to see the warrant that's sort of extraditing you?"

"Warrant?" Bugwine winced: *extradite* sounded too close to *execute* for comfort!

"Yep. For that burglary job you pulled. Everything hooks up fine now. We've just found where you committed it. Going to jail you and try you there, now."

A moment later the shivering Mr. Breck was being thrust into a curtained car parked before the jail. The white gentleman climbed in beside him, hand-

cuffed him to the door, and they were off through the formless darkness.

"Left your finger-prints all over the place, they say," growled the officer semi-enlighteningly as they rode. "And made more tracks than a centipede. Besides the three eye-witnesses that saw you coming out with the swag."

Mr. Breck sank lower in his overalls and despair, and ignored the landscape. *Where* he had done all this didn't matter, beside the incontestable fact that he had evidently committed the perfect crime in a moment of absent-mindedness. All he had accomplished now was to swap jails.

At last he had proof of this. The car drew up before the forbidding loom of a second and larger hoosegow. Bugwine perceived with a start that he was in the worst possible place for his present plight—Demopolis, Alabama! Localizing and rendering the more painful the embarrassment of Columbus and himself on the morrow.

Swiftly Bugwine was hustled to a new cell. And where, he mourned there, was Columbus? Columbus, who was all the time rubbing it in on a boy that his brains alone kept Bugwine from disaster. Even echo failed to answer now.

From the moldy mattress in his cell, Mr. Breck gazed despondently into darkness—mental and otherwise—that ever deepened. He was here, but why? What had started out as a series of unfortunate accidents was winding up as an air-tight case against him that included a full outfit of warrant, witnesses, and finger-prints. He had evidently played hell again, but where and how? Baptist Hill would ring with derisive guffawings over the ignoble end to which the blundering Bugwine had brought a noble effort to decorate the Collins agency for its sterling, if ever-accidental, devotion to law and order!

THEN, from up the corridor, sounded the familiar step and jangle of the jailer. Bugwine had no false hopes now. But there flared up the flame that now ever ate and smoldered in his bosom.

"Cap'n," he voiced it as the approaching turnkey came opposite his bars, "please, suh, is you mind tellin' me somep'n?"

"If I know it. Shoot!"

"Well, suh, who cuss-out dat warrant for me dat fotched me here in all dem handcuffs? And what for?" Those handcuffs kept rankling.

"That's easy! A long tall negro named Columbus Collins swore it out. For burglarizing his pawnshop—"

"*Columbus! Bu'glarizin' his—ouah—pawnshop!*" howled the stunned Mr. Breck. Then the whole hallway rang with his wrath. Here, it seemed, was the final straw! Double-crossing, added to circumstantial evidence to make an air-tight case against him! So, instead of busying himself freeing his helper, yowled Bugwine, fairly beside himself, Columbus had supplied the law with its one needed missing link by swearing out this warrant! *That* gave form, weight, and credence to what suspicion had hung on Bugwine in Genesee, with the hand-cuffed trip an added insult.

Then an opposing factor loomed, and collided head-on with Mr. Breck's earlier inabilities of the mind. How could Columbus have hoped to avert the feared public laughter, if his own actions had now resulted in half of the about-to-be-honored firm being in jail, and the *other half* had put it there? At this ultimate in idiocy the straining and stricken intellect of Mr. Breck collapsed, and for an hour he picked daisies, glassy-eyed, upon the concrete floor of his cell. . . . If the agency was wrecked past mending, so was Bugwine. And Columbus' vaunted brain was clearly not so hot after all—which was no comfort to his addled aide *now!*

FAR into the night, there again sounded footfalls in the jail-house halls. Nearer they came; berserk rage flamed afresh in the soul of Mr. Breck. For one of those pairs of feet unmistakably belonged to the perfidious Columbus—come no doubt to gloat—Columbus, whose aberration had not only ruined Bugwine but who, when the hour of medalling came, would prove to have also wrecked himself!

The steps grew nearer, and, through the bars like a wet chimpanzee with the sniffles, the put-upon and sorely tried Mr. Breck glared savagely upward at his chief.

"Eve'ytime I sees you, Bugwine, you's in de jail-house, lately!" Columbus greeted him jovially.

"You tellin' me?" Rattlesnakes would have hung themselves from envy at the venom in Bugwine's voice. Old handcuffs bit deeper after they were off!

"So *my* brains has to rally round as usual to git you out yo' jam," patronized Mr. Collins coldly.

"Your brains! Git me out!" Foam appeared upon the lips of the now wildly amok Mr. Breck. "Why, you gits me in! In here—wid handcuffs! Y-y-y!" Words failed the spluttering Bugwine.

"And de white-folks here comes along wid me," resumed the assured Columbus, "to unlock your doors and set you free!"

THREE blocks up the dim-lit emptiness of Strawberry Street at 3 A.M. the burdened brain of Mr. Breck again surrendered, quit like a dog in its defeat.

"I gits into de jail-house at Genesee," he labored in baffled summary, "for stealin' my own knives and forks—wid my own burglar-tools. Den you swear out a warrant what prove I done it—out of our own pawnshop in Demopolis. (Which I aint!) And understands how you can un-swear de warrant den, and git me loose, sayin' you find I aint done it. But what burns me down is, why is you got to fotch me fifty miles, handcuffed to de car, and slap me into jail here, whar eve'ybody liable to know about it?"

"Brains, runt!" snapped his chief expansively. "And finally seein' some use for dat pawnshop you buys. It gimme one idea—and de city hall another—dat all you needed to git loose was a change of venue."

"Looked more like a change of jail-houses!" mumbled the sullen Mr. Breck ungraciously.

"Sho! Dat what I got to git for you first. Beca'ze you'd got yourself into jail in Genesee whar my brains aint help you none, as long as dey is holdin' you to find out whar you is wanted. And my warrant told 'em dat."

"I'll say it did! Hung more on me dan I'd hung on myself. But"—old wounds rankled—"why aint you turn me loose in Genesee, den, instead of haulin' me back here in handcuffs?"

"Well, now, dat,"—and Columbus paused in his stride to strut,—"is whar de brains comes in! My brains."

"In de handcuffs?"

"Naw! In me killin' two geeses wid one warrant! Not only gittin' you back here whar de white-folks knows you is too dumb to be guilty, and won't even try you; but extraditin' you wid it too, so de Law is got to give you a ride home what you was too busted to pay for! Handcuffed, yeah—but what's a couple of handcuffs between jails, big boy, when you's fixin' to be medalled for puttin' all dem other crooks in jail, de very day you gits out of jail yo'self!"

Tracks

A forest-ranger's job is not all fire-fighting — as this vivid story of dangerous adventure will attest.

By HAROLD
CHANNING WIRE

BERT ALLEN had let a prisoner escape. "Still," said Baird, the supervisor at headquarters, "you needn't resign because of that."

Forest Guard Allen shook his head. "You're being square with me, all right; but—" He tossed his bronze shield onto the super's desk. "I don't deserve to wear this now."

Baird shoved both hands into his pockets, leaned back in his seat and let the badge remain where it had fallen.

"Don't let this thing eat on you," he advised. "We all make mistakes."

"Mistake!" Allen exploded, his lean face grim with self-accusation. "Plain bone-headed carelessness, that's what it was!"

Baird shrugged. "I'm not complaining. Isn't that enough? You didn't know how bad Cowan was. I am dog-gone sure he wouldn't have slipped away if I'd warned you."

Allen was sure of it also, though he reflected that this was a poor time to be consoling himself with what he might have done.

By telephone to his lonely guard station high on the Sierra roof, had come word of the bank robbery down in the valley settlement under the eastern slope. Baird had talked to him from ranger headquarters there and had given him a description of the man Cowan. The capture had been easy, too easy. Cowan had come up the trail, ignorant of the forest service line that had sent word ahead of him. Allen had surprised him in camp at dusk, had ridden back with the fellow to the guard station, tied him. In the morning he was gone. Carelessness somewhere, that was all.

"I should have told you he was a hard one," Baird was saying, "already with a term in Folsom. That big, ready good-



nature of his is only a cover. It has fooled more than one man."

The supervisor paused, then flicked the badge across the desk with his forefinger. "Put it on, Bert. Go back to High Meadow station."

Allen's eyes fell upon the shield with its lone pine tree flanked by the letters U. S. Through the open door he looked up at the sheer granite wall of the eastern Sierra slope. He loved that country up there. It was no easy thing to quit.

He turned abruptly to the supervisor. "Will you hold that badge a week?"

Baird nodded. "Yes; or a month. What's hit you?"

"I'm going after Cowan. It'll take time, but I think I can find him."

"How?"

"Tracks. You wouldn't let me follow him yesterday because he went out of the forest. If I'm not in the service, I can go any place."

"And end up in hell," Baird snapped, "if you start out single-handed! This is a job for the sheriff's office now."

"Yeah," Allen scoffed. "Let the sheriff do it because the forest service fell down! That would be sweet, wouldn't it?"

Baird laughed grimly. "You win. Go to it. This piece of brass will wait."

It seemed Allen had scant chance. Anyone who has been packed along the High Sierras north from Walker's Pass, will remember a stark granite barrier rising from the Mojave Desert on the east, and breaking down westward in lesser mountain ranges, interlocking, steep-sided, tree-covered, slashed through by cañons whose bottoms seldom know full daylight. For one man to track another into that land might even seem impossible.

Yet all tracks are not made upon the ground, and not all are footprints. There are signs; a turned stone, broken twigs,

even so slight a thing as a trampled blade of grass. In the air are others; the sudden wheeling of a bird, a wisp of dust or smoke, and sounds that carry far in that high still atmosphere.

These things, and more, were as good as printed directions to Bert Allen. He left headquarters in the cool of evening, and came about midnight to his guard station on High Meadow.

At the log cabin there he made up his traveling pack, putting jerked meat, coffee and hard bread in saddle-bags, and changing his saddle pad for two blankets, doubled, which he could use if necessary. He shed his service khaki and dressed in cow-country blue denim that he had worn before coming into the forest work. For three hours then he slept.

The tracks started west by north. At four-thirty, with dawn breaking in a clear green band over the pine tops, he mounted and followed Cowan's line of escape. The man was heavy, a huge, apelike fellow, with short legs. For some distance beyond the cabin his steps were visible in a sand rim around High Meadow. He had gone slowly; his tracks were close together and made with caution.

But in half a mile he broke into a run. Here he followed a tourist trail, his boot-marks showing long strides. That he had run in the night, Allen knew by the way he had stumbled into logs and occasionally missed a turn of the path. At the mouth of a cañon, the tracks lost their uncertainty, meaning that about there, dawn had begun to aid him.

ALLEN looked at his watch. He had been riding for two hours. Cowan, then, was all of twenty-four hours in the lead. Abruptly the boot-prints left the traveled route and turned north. Allen halted and sat figuring. North? That was into the Red Rock country. A man could not go north there very far. Cowan would not turn east, for that was toward the desert. West was his only way, and his one choice of directions would take him to Mineral Spring Flat.

Satisfied with this, and knowing that if his calculations were right, he would gain considerable time on the other man, Allen continued down the trail at a lope. Mineral Spring lay in a basin at the fork of two cañons. A quarter of a mile above the flat, he came to Red Rock Creek and cautiously heading downstream toward Mineral Spring, sighted a clearing through the pine trunks and dismounted to reconnoiter.

Where the trees gave onto a small barren flat, he saw a cabin, and almost at the same time, tracks. These were not boot-marks, but more an omen which his imagination must fill in. The place was not abandoned. Prospector's tools leaned against the shanty. A pair of overalls hung on a line. Yet the door was open, and as Allen moved from the trees, a coyote ran out of the room.

"Bold as the devil," Allen thought. "No one inside since when!"

He went on afoot, came to loose ground about the shanty and studied it. Tracks again. Confidence surged within him. Cowan had come this way. He looked in. The room was deserted; more than that, it was wrecked. Allen frowned as he glanced about, seeing an overturned table, a broken chair, a shattered lamp, all signs of a terrific fight. Suddenly he stooped above a second set of boot-prints. They were Cowan's, leaving the shanty. He had carried a heavy burden, for the steps were wide-spread, staggering, and pressed more deeply on the inner side.

Allen walked upon them out across the clearing, then down a short path that ended at a prospect-shaft in a dry gulch. Even without looking, he knew what he would find there. And when he had used a bright tin can to flash the sun into the hole, he turned away, tight-jawed with relentless fury. Cowan was a killer, a fiend. . . . No man should live to tell which way he had passed nor when.

From the prospect-hole, the tracks continued downward. Mounted again, Allen followed, finding Cowan had been wise enough to avoid the trail, yet ignorant that he left the best of marks when he walked on pine needles. True, there were no boot-prints. But top needles on a pine mat are brown, those underneath are yellow. Every step the man took was indicated by spots of changed color.

Animals also left their marks in passing. Twice Allen followed a blind lead, picking up the broad, thick-toed prints of a bear that had gone the same direction as Cowan. For an hour in the afternoon, he went by reasoning alone. Cowan was headed for Deep Valley, his general course was west—somewhere his tracks would show.

THEY reappeared at the time night had forced him to travel the forest-service pack routes. Allen's own day was nearing dusk as he picked up the familiar heavy boots. He followed them at a lope, his mind, as always, visualizing

the scene ahead. In a few more miles he would plunge into the gorge of Kern River. Beyond that, on the granite flank of the Great Arroyo, Cowan's boots would leave almost nothing for him to find.

He was within half a mile of the river, and approaching the strip of grassland that bordered it, when his horse threw its ears forward suddenly and lifted its head to whinny. Allen slapped him into silence, reining him down as a fence loomed out of the twilight. The wire gate was open. He halted. A squatter's place? He thought so.

Moving slowly, he came into a pasture, saw fresh horse-tracks but no animals, then the squatter's house. For a moment he believed it too was deserted, perhaps wrecked as that other had been. Dusk slipped into dark as he sat considering his next deal. It was then that he saw the cracks of yellow lamplight around one window. Some one was inside with blinds drawn. Windows blinded in this country? What for?

Swinging off, Allen led his horse, reached the door and knocked with the butt of his gun.

At once there sounded a shuffle of footsteps. Lamplight behind the window decreased. Then came a time of silence. Allen moved his body from in direct line with the door and stood to the left of the casement.

"Who's thar?" The voice boomed thickly. It was not Cowan's.

"Cow-puncher," said Allen. "I'd like a cup of coffee, if you've got it."

No answer. And there was nothing to foretell of a movement in the dark. Yet suddenly Allen knew some one was standing behind him. He could feel it. The man had crept out a rear door. His muscles tensed and a chill turned him rigid.

All his control was needed when the voice ordered: "Go in. Don't look back till I say so."

He obeyed. Opening the door, he was immediately full in the light of a lamp that was placed upon a table, its nickel reflector throwing a strong beam about him.

"Put your gun on that table."

Again Allen obeyed the command, somehow feeling secure from the very fact of so much precaution. This man was protecting himself.

"Now," came the final word, "sit."

When Allen had dropped upon a stool, the man came in, a stooped, gray-haired fellow, wrinkled with age and browned

by the sun. Colorless eyes stared belligerently from under shaggy brows.

"Cow-puncher, eh?" the man grunted. "Where from?"

Allen named a big cattle-company south of the mountains.

"What're you doin' up here then?" the old man countered.

"Lookin' for strays. Guess I strayed some myself."

For a full two minutes Allen underwent the old fellow's scrutiny. At last the man seemed convinced. He too sat down, drawing a bench from under the table.

Relief sounded in his voice as he said, "I reckon you're strayed, all right. Can't be too sure of anyone, though. You aint seen anything of my horses, have you? Branded K on the left shoulder. My name's Kramer."

Allen concealed his sudden rise of interest. "Lost a bunch?"

"Lost, hell!" Kramer exploded. "Stole! Had 'em stole last night. Later than this some one came outside the house like you done just now. Didn't knock. I'd been feelin' uneasy, and blew out the light. This morning I found my horses gone—all six of 'em."

"That's sure tough," Allen sympathized. "All driven off?" he continued, trying to gather information without making it too noticeable. "Or could some of them be ridden?"

Kramer considered. "A man couldn't catch any except old Blue. He's plumb gentle."

"Well I saw where some one had come down the mountain afoot," Allen offered. "I guess he caught Blue and drove the others. That's about it?"

Kramer nodded.

"I'll watch," Allen promised. "Was this one shod?"

"Maybe so. Or maybe he has wore his shoes off by now. If they're on, they'd be pretty slick. I guess they was number twos."

"Sort of a big horse," Allen observed, having a good idea of the animal. He stood up. "I've got to drift on tonight. If you could spare me some coffee—"

"Sure. Drag it off the stove there. Help yourself."

Over his drink, Allen completed his questions. "Did you track the bunch?"

"Some," said Kramer. "Can't hoof it much myself. They went south, headed to the ford about five mile down."

Allen finished his coffee. "Thanks. I've got an idea I'll come across your

horses, since I'm traveling south too. Maybe I can turn 'em this way."

The tracks were not hard to follow, even by starlight. Allen rode along where the bunch had trampled a path in the river grass, reached the ford and saw that the animals had been sent into the water. He too crossed, and coming out on the rocky bank opposite, knew he could go no farther that night.

Satisfied, confident of results tomorrow, he lay down for a few hours' sleep. Cowan had needed one horse to ride. He had taken the others greedily; and that was what would undo him.

No two horses leave tracks alike, even though they are shod with the same kind of shoes. Some cover their forefeet marks with their hindfeet. Some overstep. Some fall short. Then there are long narrow shoes, and round blunt ones; large and small; smooth and lugged. One horse digs in with his toes as he walks. Another strikes the ground flat-footed. A trail-wise man can tell the size, age and build of a horse by his tracks. He can tell everything but the color; and he will discover that also, if the animal passes through thick brush, leaving a hair or two.

AT dawn, Allen began on the river sand bank and picked up the trail. It was an indistinct path where the six had splashed out of the water and raced toward a wooded ridge. Cowan had struck trouble there. The horses had stampeded. All at once Allen was confronted by half a dozen separate tracks.

Each animal had run off in a different direction, though their general course continued west, away from the river. Allen halted and sat scowling upon the trails. Five, he knew, were those of loose horses; the sixth had a rider. But which one was that?

He rode on, believing the animals would band together again and give him some clue. Over the ridge and down the far side, they had done as he supposed, and in a thicket of oak there, his way was clear. Five tracks ran straight beneath the low branches. But one went around them. A rider on that one, unable to pass under, had turned out. Allen got down and studied the shoe prints of this horse. They were large, and worn, with one bare foot. Furthermore, they had been shaped almost round, the sort of iron needed by an old horse whose hoof-shell has begun to spread. Surely this was Kramer's horse Blue.

Cowan had not caught up with the five that had stampeded. Beyond the oak thicket, Allen found Blue's tracks imprinted over the path made by the others, but where they had continued at a run, their marks far apart, Blue had soon dropped into a trot. In perhaps half a mile Cowan had turned north.

Riding rapidly, Allen knew he was headed for Deep Valley. He had never been there, but knew the place by its reputation. The name was well taken, for it was hidden deep in the Sierras, reached only by trails, and inhabited by an assorted lot of rustlers, game-poachers, and a general driftage of those who needed long or short periods of isolation.

That Cowan should go there was natural enough; that he would be well received was certain, for he could pay his way. At least the ten thousand dollars which he had taken from the desert bank were still unfound. He was not carrying the money, Allen knew, yet he could promise a split to anyone helping him.

TOWARD mid-morning, old Blue's trail showed signs of limping. That bare foot was beginning to stone-bruise. Allen urged his own horse faster, gaining time, and then, when he least expected it, Deep Valley plunged abruptly down before his eyes. It lay in a shadowed bowl surrounded by thousand-foot granite walls, the whole basin being about ten miles long by five wide. Patches of grassland spotted the bottom, while a cluster of buildings toward the southern end marked the settlement.

Allen turned that way, riding boldly, planning to call himself a cowhand out of work. If he appeared ignorant of these mountains and had stumbled into the valley by chance, so much the better.

But he was not questioned. That in itself was bad. Two men sitting on the steps of the general store nodded to his greeting, looked him over minutely, said nothing. He rode on. Other buildings were grouped in a square about a cleared space, but all appeared to be private houses, except a blacksmith shop across from the store.

A short, thick-bodied man, with black hair and a smoke-streaked face looked up from his forge as Allen entered.

"Got time to tack on a couple?" Allen asked.

He swung off, shot a glance around the shop, then purposely sat upon a keg near the pile of cast-off horseshoes.

The man grunted. In a moment he

kicked out his box of tools and came over to the horse.

"Forefeet," Allen offered, adding, "sort of hard on 'em, this country is."

"Come far, huh?"

"Yeah, south of here." Allen spoke casually, smoking a cigarette with no apparent interest in anything else. But his eyes were upon the cast-off pile. About a dozen old shoes lay there on the floor, probably the day's work, and on top were three that gripped him with sudden familiarity. They were large, well-worn, and almost round. He had come into the shop wondering if Cowan might not have had his lame horse shod at once. Here was the answer. He'd have to work out a new set of tracks for Blue now. His eyes went again to his own horse.

The smith had picked up one forefoot and clamped it between his knees. With it that way, he paused for a fraction of a minute, looking. Allen sat motionless. Something in the man's intent study warned him.

The foot thudded down as the blacksmith tore off the shoe and tossed it onto the pile. "From the south, eh?" he said.

Allen nodded, holding to his story, though he knew he was caught in a lie.

Cowhands in different districts take to different fashions in horseshoes. Those in the soft soil land of the south range never put on the heavy iron adopted by men who rode the rocky east slope.

After that first scrutiny, the blacksmith showed no interest, but Allen understood. Before long all Deep Valley would know he came from eastward over the mountains. And that meant Cowan also would know.

Tracks! Allen made a few himself during the hours of daylight that were left. He had not ridden far beyond the blacksmith shop, when, looking back, he saw the man walk out to the pair seated on the store steps. At once these two stood up and disappeared into an adjoining house. Meaning enough in that.

Allen rode south, came to a creek and doubled north. On a rock bench he climbed east, and near the trail where he had entered Deep Valley, halted to watch results. They were not long in developing. Before noon, two mounted men were picking up the course. His doubling at the creek did not fool them; nor the rock bench. They followed as surely as he himself could have done.

He retreated farther up the trail. The men came on. He moved again, riding on the most barren spots. But those two

were trackers. Abruptly he realized the game had turned. He was the hunted, not the hunter. Still, he could cover tracks as well as follow them, and he wanted to get a close look at this pair.

FOR an hour he rode up the cañon path, keeping his horse's shoeprints, two new ones and two old, plain in the dust. On the ridge he found a wide swath where cattle had been driven over the valley rim and on down toward the river, and turning into it, left his tracks for another mile. Here the cattle drive crossed the backbone of granite, and coming upon the hard surface, Allen dismounted, and one by one, pried off his horse's shoes, placing them in his bags. Barefooted hoofs leave no white scars on granite rock. So when he started on again, whirling up the backbone instead of continuing ahead as the cattle had done, he passed without leaving a sign.

Still keeping on the backbone, he entered a shelter of fir, stopping when the trunks protected him from below. Though concealed, he could watch the trail for a space of a few hundred yards, and he sat waiting, a little tense with wondering if the men would do as he calculated.

They came presently, riding up the cattle trail at a lope, tall, lean men, their faces indistinguishable from this distance. Both wore black, limp-brimmed hats. Both were doubly armed, with six-guns and rifles.

They jogged onto the granite backbone, crossed it, suddenly halted. Allen heard a muttered oath. The two men were staring at the ground, where, he knew, were cattle tracks, nothing more. In a moment they dismounted and squatted on their heels. He could see gestures; one waving east, the other shaking his head. Then this last one pointed south of east, his hand indicating a certain long deep cañon that dropped eventually into Kern River.

Presently they seemed to agree, for both mounted and wheeled their horses. They rode from the granite, slid over a creek bank and in a few minutes were leaving their flag of dust along the deep cañon bottom.

There was a definite directness about this move. If they had given him up, then what? They were headed away from Deep Valley and toward the forest reserve. For a time Allen sat working out his theory. He was on the point of returning to the trail, when his horse

suddenly looked off to the left. Allen waited. First he heard rapid footfalls, then a horse and rider came into sight. The animal was a rangy blue, with Cowan riding. He too was following tracks.

A slow, grim smile creased Allen's face. There was something queer about this. Cowan tracking those others? Some one double-crossing some one else? It looked that way. In about five minutes he re-nailed his horse's shoes, then moved onto the trail behind Cowan.

For two hours he rode with wisps of dust and the startled flight of birds telling him the position of the men. At sundown he closed in, knowing he was less than a quarter mile behind the last. And then, as he approached the banks of the Kern River, he felt that the end of his tracking could not be far off.

He was almost down the slope, with the river glistening ahead in the dark, when he started at the abrupt crash of a rifle-shot. A second and third followed instantly. Then before the echoes had scarcely died, a rider came racing back up the trail. With his own gun blazing, Allen met him, firing two shots high and holding the next down close, to let the man have it if he did not stop.

The horse reared before his fire, the rider clinging drunkenly to the horn with both hands.

"Drag him down!" Allen shouted. "Keep away from your gun. Now sit there!"

He rode ahead, covering the man. Even before he could see the face, he knew that apeline bulk. "Well, Cowan," he declared, "here we are again!"

ON the river-bank two men lay dead, but they were no part of Allen's job, save as evidence if the sheriff wanted to ride this far and get it. Upon leaving them, Allen turned to his prisoner, now bound hand and foot to his horse.

"Cowan," he asked, "just where did those two come into your game, anyway?"

"You're a smart young feller," the man scoffed. "Figure it out. Maybe I talked too much. Maybe they was double-crossin' me."

It was again morning as Allen reached High Meadow station and called Baird on the telephone. His report was brief: "I've got a man up here."

"Cowan?" the super's voice shot back. "Hold him there! I'll come myself."

"Good!" said Allen. "And say, you might as well bring along my badge."

Gods Guard the Brave

SLOWLY, very slowly, the little schooner was standing in for Mutsamudu Road from the westward, for this was the best approach during the present southeast monsoon, now at the verge of changing.

Douglas stood near the wheel, intently watching the green rising mass of Anjouan Island through the glasses. He was tall, spare, firmly knit, and carried his head high. The lines of his sun-browned features were harsh and strong, the gray eyes were very level and steady, cornered by weather-wrinkles.

The Arab captain, who stood at the helm near by, turned and flung him an uneasy glance, and spoke in a low voice.

"Rais Douglas, if you do not return aboard within an hour—"

"Then slip your cable and run for it," answered Douglas calmly. "There's no warship in harbor; you can get clear. Tomorrow is the 25th, which means the break of the monsoon. Even were there pursuit, you could elude it; a hurricane will come tomorrow, certainly."

"Desert you, in their hands?"

"Bah!" Douglas laughed. "Don't borrow trouble, Yusuf. No one here will recognize me, after five years. Remember that I'm on the articles as first officer; act accordingly, and no one will suspect anything wrong."

He resumed his careful study of the great triangular peak ahead. From this direction, it appeared to be a succession of forested mountains rising one above the other, the summit veiled in fleecy cloud. Comparatively few white men had ever looked upon this island lying with its companions midway in the Mozambique Channel, with Africa to the west and Madagascar to the east. Yet here had generations of Arab sultans held sway, fighting the Portuguese and the Hova kings, pirating up and down the eastern seas; sultans who were gone and forgotten, with their armadas and their wars and their loves, in the mist of time.

A sultan still ruled here, however, though he was now only a fat gentleman who ran his sugar plantation and indulged the lusts of the flesh, while the French ran his sultanate. None the less,



he was a sultan; that was one reason Douglas had come here—or rather, returned here. If there were other reasons, they were locked within his heart.

Very slowly the schooner glided into the deep indentation of coast where lay the capital, Mutsamudu; the long promontories to north and south stretched like the arms of an octopus to enfold her.

A stirring novelette of desperate adventure on strange tropic seas.

By H. BEDFORD-JONES



Illustrated by
John Clymer

"He came last night," said Helene. "He taunted me, struck me. . . . He had already guessed just what you would do. He said that you would go around the island to the north—and he wanted to meet you himself, head you off, sink you and destroy you!"

A close observer would have gathered a singular impression from the appearance of this schooner and the men aboard her. Seven Arabs clustered in the bows; their captain was at the helm beside Douglas; bearded men, hard and lean and silent, their eyes fastened upon the island ahead with an air of attention, of expectancy, of suspense. Before them all lay life or death; and they knew it.

The schooner was small, dirty, slovenly, but beneath the grime that covered her struck out an occasional flash of snowy white, a passing glimpse of polished brass, as though the dirt were not accidental but deliberate. Her lines were beautiful, and when she leaned far over, close-hauled, the sun flashed on bright and unfouled copper along her bottom.

"The wind is failing, Rais Yusuf," said Douglas suddenly. "Best take in the drag, for I want to get in soon after the siesta hour. And hoist the signal to the forepeak; Ram Chandra will have eyes on the lookout."

The voice of Rais Yusuf lifted along the deck. His men moved to obey. They brought in a dripping canvas sail that had been dragging behind the schooner, bellying out in the water and retarding her speed enormously. Then, as she

came about on the other tack, they darted to the lines. Rais Yusuf let out an angry bellow.

"Sons of unholy mothers, remember your orders! Move slowly! Foul your lines! Do we want these Frenchmen to think us good seamen?"

The men obeyed, with grins and jests. The Portuguese flag was hoisted. Douglas, who had gone below, now came on deck again. Instead of his spruce whites, he wore soiled and crumpled garments. His erect bearing had become a lazy slouch.

"Make the Fontaine anchorage off the coconut plantation," he said to Rais Yusuf. "The bay's empty, all right. The Messag  ries steamer was here yesterday, and won't come again for a week. We've arrived exactly right."

The Arab nodded.

This wide-flung bay, which looked like the half-sunk center of a vast volcano,—and was exactly that,—showed empty except for a few native fishing-boats, two anchored Arab dhows, and a number of those craft called *boutres*, peculiar to the Comoro Islands, their masts leaning forward instead of aft.

The gray eyes of Douglas sparkled, and an eager smile touched his lips. One became suddenly aware of the gay springing spirit beneath his mask of repression; yet his air was thoughtful as he gazed. What would he find here, after five years? Enemies, certainly. One friend, a task to do, a risk to run! And H  l  ne? Probably long since gone to France or elsewhere with her husband. Five years is a long time. And Douglas had not written his cousin. She had left his protection, had defied him, had chosen her own course. For all he knew, she might be dead. Yet she had been his cousin, his more than sister. Perhaps, after all, he should have kept in touch with her.

HE flung back his shoulders, rejecting such unwelcome thoughts. Looking at the old lower town, close to the water, he found it unchanged. A rising sea of thatched roofs, of stone houses with narrow, twisting streets, dominated by the old citadel behind. From the customhouse at the southwest corner of town blew out the tricolor of France, and again from the tribunal, up past the black minaret of the mosque.

Upward flowed the newer town, along the steep road bordered by agaves, on to the Homba plateau behind. Public offices of all kinds, the hospital, finally the

Residency above them all, another flag fluttering over its tiled roof.

Christmas Eve then—with the monsoon roaring out of the northwest on the morrow! Was she here, perhaps? Did she too think of other days when they had celebrated Christmas with holly and hilarity in another world—they two, cousins who had all their lives been as sister and brother? Yes, he had done wrong to abandon her. If she had married Renaud against his orders, if she had defied him, that was her doing; but he should have kept an eye on things.

Again he forced down the tormenting, surging thoughts, and turned to the Arab beside him, an ironical smile on his lips.

"There ahead," he said, "are thirty thousand natives and seventy whites. Only two among them all know what is to be done. But here aboard us are eight of you, and all know."

RAIS YUSUF'S sharp eyes glittered. "The six men are of my own family," he said quietly. "The cook is not, but I answer fully for him. Death may overtake all of us, but not shame. You need not fear that any tongue here will blab; we shall not even go ashore."

"I do not fear it," said Douglas, and laughed a little. "Indeed, it is far more likely that one of the two men ashore will loose an incautious word! That is my fear."

"Not Ram Chandra," said the Arab stoutly. "An infidel is he, a pagan Hindu, but a man among men. In Aden, in Zanzibar, in the Mauritius, his word is better than any bond."

"Nay; not the Hindu, but the Sultan!"

"May Allah avert the evil!" said Rais Yusuf. Then he stepped from the wheel. "Here, play your part. Now I become the master. Remember, we speak no French. Use Swahili with us, and French with the port officers. Their boat is putting out from the *douane* now."

Douglas nodded as he took over the helm.

"I have the papers ready," he said. "Leave the talking to me."

He held the schooner straight on her course, in silence. The men grouped at the rail, also in silence. Rais Yusuf donned a clean *jellab* and seated himself on the transom, smoking, leaving everything to his mate, as one of his stripe might do, were that mate a white man.

Now they came aboard, the trim, brusque Frenchmen. Less than fifty of

them altogether were on this island among the teeming thousands of brown folk. Douglas played his part well, not too well, gaining the contempt of the officers but not their suspicion.

"Schooner *Abas* of Lorenzo Marques, for Anjouan and Zanzibar." He handed over the documents. "We have a small shipment of trade goods for a merchant here named Ram Chandra, who is giving us a lading of sugar and rum for Zanzibar."

"Ram Chandra, eh? The Sultan's agent. Yes, yes, everything is correct," said one, and the port doctor lined up all hands for pratique, feeling their breasts, looking into their faces. The anchorage was indicated, and Douglas voiced the desire to go ashore and see Ram Chandra at once, since he was supercargo as well as mate.

"Of course," came the reply, with a shrug. "You'll find his barges putting out in no time, to get your cargo. I see you've not much for him. All clear! Any weapons aboard?"

"None," said Douglas, feeling the weight of the pistol under his arm. "Unless these Arabs have knives, m'sieu. It is possible, of course—"

They left him lounging against the rail. Fifteen minutes later, he was heading ashore for his gamble with destiny, a smear of dirt across his unshaven face, and his shoulders slumped forward.

It was five years since Douglas, then using a *nom-de-guerre*, had been in these waters. In those days he had barely avoided a French prison. To help unfortunate natives escape the tyranny of civilization is no joking matter; but he had got clear.

Now he was back, on much the same errand; but men were here who had known him before. He could take no chances. Prison doors were still wide.

He shambled along the narrow, twisting little streets, cap pulled down over his eyes, a cigarette drooping from one corner of his mouth. About him were old stone houses, many in ruins, a perfect maze; yet he knew his way perfectly.

THE streets were dark, somber, unwholesome. He passed the Monkira mosque with its black minaret, dominating the terraces and thatched roofs of the lower levels, and glanced sidewise at the doorkeepers and the rows of slippers. Around, everywhere, every moment, surged the passing throngs, men in long yellow robes, with fez or white *cufia*,

gorgeous leather sandals, gay sashes and curved daggers. Brown men, Hindus, yellow Malagasies, street gamins, negroid Makoa, here and there a Chinese merchant; a very few women, cloaked except for one eyehole. The crowds teemed, chattered, smelled to heaven.

So he came to the Amombo quarter, where the old palace of the Sultan, the treasury, the tribunal of the *cadi* who dispensed the law, and the houses of the richer natives clustered above the lower town. Still farther up the steep hillside were the official buildings, with great clusters of hibiscus and roses scenting the unlovely air below; but Douglas was not going up there. Here lay his present goal, in the busy bazaar of the Hindu trader Ram Chandra, just off the Pangare, the great square of public celebrations and dances, and the bull-fighting peculiar to the Comoros.

He turned into the cool depths of the bazaar and waited.

No word was spoken. Here from the upper level one could see all the ocean outspread, to where Grand Comoro emerged from the horizon, its volcano smoking among a sea of clouds. A little thing like a schooner could be clearly descried. There could be no mistake about the ship. There could be none about the man, for whites were few—not seventy in the whole of Anjouan.

SURE enough, a fat Hindu came forward, salaamed to Douglas, then beckoned him quickly back through the depths of the bazaar into a rear room. Then along a passage, out through a garden, in at the side entrance of a large stone house. Presently he was ushered into a cool room where a spectacled, black, heavy-set man sat smoking a water-pipe.

When the door had closed and the two men were alone, Ram Chandra motioned to a chair, indicated the bottles and glasses on the table, and smiled.

"I was expecting you, sahib. Drink and be at peace!" he said in excellent English. "Here we cannot be overheard; in this room is safety. I rejoice to see you as you are. I might not have recognized you, had I not expected you."

Douglas laughed, threw aside his cap, straightened his shoulders, and poured himself a drink. Then, with a sigh of relief, he settled back in his chair and regarded this Hindu whom he had known of old.

"A good thing we know each other!"

he said. "I'm here, Bahadur Ram Chandra."

"Tut, tut! My only title is that of merchant, in these degenerate days," said the other. "Well, you know what is to be done."

"I know nothing at all," returned Douglas. While the other eyed him in surprise, he reached out and took a cigarette from the open tin on the table.

"You know nothing? Yet you are here?"

Douglas grinned. "I heard your agent in Zanzibar talk, yes. On the strength of it I picked up Yusuf, went down to Lorenzo Marques, and here we are. But most men lie; you alone tell the truth. I know only what you will tell me."

The Hindu chuckled. "Well, sahib, I too lie on occasion; still, it is better to have things clearly understood. You know that the Sultan is wealthy. His great plantation, his treasures, his stock in development companies, all have created vast wealth for him. His oldest son has come to the age of fifteen. The French desire to deport this Saïd Ali to Reunion and let him live out his life there. He hates them. They distrust him, regard him as dangerous. They wish a younger, more pliant son to have the succession."

"What sort of lad is this Saïd Ali?"

"Saïd Ali is a man among men!" And a hint of warmth came into Ram Chandra's voice. "Brave, intelligent, old beyond his years. The Sultan desires him

to make the Mecca pilgrimage at once, to enhance his reputation, and then receive an education at the Al Azhar university in Cairo, where the boy's uncle now lives. The French refuse flatly to allow it. They wish to smother the boy's life among luxuries and women, in the midst of the Indian Ocean, out of the world."

Douglas nodded, puffing silently at his cigarette. He knew the way of the French with petty rulers, particularly where trouble boded.

"The Sultan can trust no one," pursued the Hindu. "His council are selfish, greedy men who depend wholly on the French. Saïd Ali cannot leave here, normally; the French talk daily of transporting him to Reunion, and will do it very shortly. The Sultan has sworn it shall not be. It means life or death to the boy, or rather a living death of soul and body. There is no one here who could be trusted—no one! But I heard that you were at Zanzibar."

Douglas inclined his head gravely at this compliment.

Now he was back, on much the same errand; but men were here who had known him before. He could take no chances. Prison doors were still wide.



"Anjouan," he said, "is a great place in its own eyes; but what is of vast importance here, becomes less than nothing in the great world."

"Exactly, sahib! Once away from here and in Cairo, Saïd Ali would be safe; the French would shrug their shoulders and secure the succession to a younger son. That matters not! The point is that here, he is condemned to a living death. The Sultan loves him passionately, and desires him to go out into the world, live a full life."

"By the Lord!" said Douglas. "Who wouldn't?"

"But any man who tried to leave with him, would surely perish. You understand?"

"It seems to me," said Douglas with a slight shrug at the query, "that you yourself are taking risks in arranging such a thing."



"True, sahib. However, money is only made by taking risks, and I am a merchant. And besides," added the Hindu slyly, "the Resident here loves money, so I am not greatly worried over the affair, even should blame attach to me. And I shall see that it does not."

"Very well, then. Just what's the proposition?" demanded Douglas. "If you think I'm going to take the boy and half a dozen filthy native attendants, you think wrong."

RAM CHANDRA sucked complacently at his hubble-bubble.

"Not so, sahib. The boy needs no one to hold his sandals. He goes alone, poorly dressed, a workman like others; he comes out to your schooner tomorrow with my men. Two bundles are prepared, wrapped in sugar-cane, to go aboard your craft with other bundles of cane and provisions. One holds his proper robes and personal effects. The other holds a fortune in banknotes, which the Sultan sends with him."

Douglas lifted a quizzical eyebrow.

"Aren't you afraid of the temptation?"

"Not with you, sahib. For you, I have answered to the Sultan with my head. He has heard of you from others, and knows that the French hate you. We need only settle the details. This evening at the hour of sunset prayer, the Sultan goes to the grand mosque with Saïd Ali riding beside him. This is in order that you may see the boy as he passes, and know him again in the morning when he comes."

Douglas glanced at his watch.

"Time's getting short. Your plan?"

"My barges are already around your schooner, taking out the cargo consigned to me," said Ram Chandra. "By evening, it will be finished. At sunrise the consignment for Zanzibar will come aboard. I am not sending a great quantity; all will be stowed ere noon. Saïd Ali will slip aboard, and you will attend to hiding him away. Then depart—losing no time. You should be away by noon."

"If there's a breeze," corrected Douglas. "There may be none until afternoon. But tomorrow is the 25th, eh? The day the monsoon should break, since it hasn't broken today. Hm! Then anything's possible, after all. Yes, your plan is good."

"At Zanzibar, you must arrange about landing Saïd Ali. That will be your affair."

"It's easily handled," said Douglas. "However, I may not go to Zanzibar. You can't tell what will turn up. If troubles arise, I may go elsewhere. The Mauritius, Seychelles, Bombay itself! The future must answer."

"No matter," was the complacent response. "I have an agent in each of those places and in many others. Once landed, Saïd Ali will be looked after by my agent. Here is an order on the Zanzibar agency for a thousand English pounds, the agreed sum. That is your pay, sahib. When you submit a list of all other expenses, including the pay of Yusuf and his men, it will be at once settled."

Douglas pocketed the folded paper without reading it. If Ram Chandra said what it was, then it was exactly that and nothing else.

"Agreed!" And he came to his feet. "I must get back. Sorry I'll have to land again and watch near the mosque at sunset; too many people here who might know me."

"There was no other way, sahib."

"True." Douglas looked fixedly at the Hindu. It was in his mind to ask about Renaud, but he thought better of it. He changed his purpose abruptly.

"Tell me!" he said slowly. "I need not ask in regard to your discretion; but is there any danger that the Sultan may have talked?"

THE other was silent for a moment—a bad sign.

"Sahib, I trust only my own lips. He would not talk knowingly. Still, he is an old man and given to pleasures, and you know how words fly in the women's quarters. He need not even utter a word; a look, a gesture, might be construed to mean anything. Yes, sahib, there is always danger."

"Right."

Douglas closed the discussion with the one word, and turned to the door. It was opened before him. The attendant appeared with a salaam, and he was on his way out again.

"*There is always danger.*" The phrase lingered with him as he passed among the throngs of natives on his return to the waterfront. Their eyes drove at him as he passed; he was more slouchy than ever, his face drawn out of shape, his walk a shamle. When, now and again, he descried the trim white figure of a French official, he turned aside and looked into the open front of a bazaar

or shop. Years back, a photograph of him had gone the rounds, and he knew these Frenchmen had long memories.

BY the time he was being carried out to the schooner, however, Douglas had lost his apprehension. After all, five years had passed.

He smiled wryly to himself, as he looked back at the town, wondering again if Captain Renaud were still here. In the old days, Renaud had been the representative of French justice, sitting in court beside the *cadi*—silent for the most part, giving his orders deftly to the native *cadi*. A waspy, vindictive man, Renaud, but a great linguist. If *Hélène* had not married Renaud, things might have been very different today.

"Well, he's probably back in Paris, or else transferred to Madagascar, and a great man up-country!" thought Douglas with a shrug. "A smart fellow, Renaud, and bound to make his way. Only a smart fellow could have married *Hélène* against my will—damn him!"

He dismissed it all and turned his thoughts ahead.

Upon reaching the schooner, he found the consignment to Ram Chandra nearly out of her. He took Rais Yusuf into the stern, where none could overhear.

"Zanzibar cargo coming aboard at sunrise, finished by noon," he said. "We'll get off by then. The cargo's just a blind, of course. I must go back ashore in half an hour for a look at the young man, so I'll know him in the morning."

"Shall I go instead?" asked the Arab, his eyes anxious. "For me there is no danger, and it is folly to take risks."

"No; I must trust my own eyes, not those of another. But I think all's safe. What about the weather tomorrow?"

"The northwest monsoon is coming, and coming hard," answered Rais Yusuf. "The glass is going down. As yet, no warnings from the signal-station on the hill, but they'll be up before sunset."

"Then, in the morning, attend to the clearance papers. We'll get off before noon if it's possible."

"Against the monsoon, Rais Douglas, it will be hard to make Zanzibar or anywhere across the channel."

Douglas smiled, and nodded toward the peak.

"With a lookout up there, signaling the other islands and the naval station at Mayotte, we'd be fools to try and make Zanzibar! They'll look for us to-

ward the mainland, but we'll be elsewhere."

Crafty admiration glinted in the dark eyes of the Arab.

Sunset was approaching when Douglas again set foot ashore and started for the upper town. Never once did he forget himself. Never did he lose the slouching walk, the lackluster expression, the stooped shoulders—he was certain of this, afterward. Nor did he catch sight of any face he knew, brown or white, except two of the officers who had come aboard upon their arrival, and these feigned not to see him. Any white man who worked on a native trader was beneath contempt.

Knowing by what way the Sultan must come to the Monkira mosque, Douglas made for this street, sauntering along, stopping for a drink, killing time until the flag went up in the black minaret for the *eshe* prayer, and the muezzin's call rang forth.

Then, suddenly, the throngs were split asunder. Guards appeared, and behind these came two mules, gayly bedizened. On one rode the Sultan, on the other a slim, alert figure at which Douglas stared hard. No difficulty in remembering this handsome, open countenance just touched with pride. Behind followed several councilors, garbed in richly brodered dark coats over their snowy garments, the glittering hilts of daggers at their waists, turbans about their heads.

So they were past. The muezzin above droned out his call to prayer, and Douglas turned to regain the waterfront.

Then he halted abruptly.

In the press of natives he felt something shoved into his palm—a folded paper. He looked around quickly. At his elbow, closely held against him by the throng, he saw a native with grizzled hair and beard; not one of the Arab race, but a black Makoa, an aborigine. This man's gaze was fastened upon him.

DOUGLAS brought up his hand and opened the crumpled bit of paper. His astonished thought was that there had been some mistake; or perhaps, this Makoa had once worked with whites and was now begging. However, when Douglas saw the clear and beautiful writing, an acute shock left him immobile.

When he perceived his own name, when he understood who must have sent this unsigned note, he stood speechless, gripped by incredulity and a certain terror. The message was brief enough:

James:

Come with the bearer, I implore you. He is safe. He knows you. His brother was one of those you rescued in the old days. Come!

She had written it, then—Hélène! She was still here!

The crowd was thinning out now. Douglas turned, met the eyes of the Makoa again, and jerked his head. The other followed him out of the throng, over beside a wall, and Douglas spoke curtly.

"You know me?"

"Yes, Rais," answered the other in Swahili. "Once I was a chief and talked with you. Now I am a gardener in the palace grounds, no better than a slave. But I do not forget."

Douglas felt a chill at his spine. These Makoa, who had not even any religion, were little removed from animals. And she had sent this man, had trusted him?

"Where is Captain Renaud now? Still here?"

"Now he is adviser to the Sultan, Rais."

Douglas swiftly reflected, a tumult of emotion whirling through his brain. If he assented, if he went to see her, the risk was terrible. It was useless. All danger aside, it was wrong. . . .

If he refused to see her— But something in his tortured spirit cried that he could not refuse. Desire drew at him, and the folly of it repelled him. He was torn this way and that. Yet the fact remained that here were two people who had recognized him, knew of his presence. She had sent to him.

"The palace gate is open, Rais," said the Makoa abruptly. "Captain Renaud lives in the house at the corner of the grounds, but he is not here. He has gone to Hellville, to Nosi Bé. It is safe. Come."

Douglas assented, with an inward curse at his own heart-hunger.

In the Comoros, night swiftly follows the sunset. As the Sultan's guards were chiefly for show, and the rear gate of the palace was unwarded, none observed the slouching white figure following the gardener into the palace grounds.

Once inside, they turned away from the approach and quickly crossed toward a bungalow at one corner—a new white bungalow with tiled roof, half concealed behind guava bushes and masses of purple bougainvillea. More and more, Douglas was wondering why this Makoa

should be trusted on such an errand. That was not like Hélène—so to trust a native.

The Makoa suddenly swerved from the bungalow to a graveled side path, and indicated a little summerhouse among the masses of vines. He spoke softly.

"There, Rais. I remain on guard. Go."

Douglas stepped forward, hand slipping under his coat. Now for the first time, suspicion entered his mind. Perhaps a trap, set by Renaud in person! The man was crafty. He must go through with it, however. Too late to back out.

So he stepped to the entrance and pushed aside the rattan lattice there.



His hand fell from the pistol. It was no trap! She was standing there, awaiting him, her figure gloriously clear in the gathering obscurity. That was like her, he thought swiftly. She had always seemed to bear an inward light—

"You, Hélène?" said Douglas calmly. "I am here."

His hand went out to hers, and the contact with her fingers was like a grip on his very heart.

"It has been a long time, James," she said quietly, her voice low, rich, a little broken. "I was at the fish-market, waiting, when you came ashore, and recognized you."

"So you sent that man to find me. Am I expected to thank you?"

She was silent for a moment; then her hand drew at his.

"Come here and sit beside me, James. There are some things I must say—hard things. I do not know where to begin, now that I have the chance to say them."

Douglas made no response. He followed her, settled beside her on a divan, waited. After a moment she spoke again.

"Tell me something. Do you think I'm the sort of woman to whine my way out of a bad bargain, James? Am I that kind?"

"My dear cousin, you're the best sport I ever knew," he said simply.

"Will you take me away from here with you?"

He stiffened, incredulous. "No. Good God, of course not!"

"Listen, James! I've no one in the world but you; I've hoped daily for you. The man is inhuman, cold, cruel, brutal. You warned me, I know. I married him against your will; you hated him, and he you. Well, now it's life or death for me; this place is a living hell. Won't you help me?"

"Not if it means taking you away."



"For you, I have answered to the Sultan with my head. He knows the French hate you," said Ram Chandra. "Ere noon, Said Ali will slip aboard; you will attend to hiding him away. Then depart."

At the absolute finality of his voice, she caught her breath in the darkness.

"Have you ceased to care anything about me? We two were children together, James; we had no one else; we meant everything to each other. We were brother and sister. And from the day of my marriage you went out of my life, when I needed you most. Was it because I refused to take your advice, defied you, married him in spite of you?"

"No," said Douglas. "It was because the French were after me—at first."

"And later, you left me to my own destiny. Well, now you're back. And now I beg you, I implore you, to rescue me! I need rescue, James, more than any man you've helped, anywhere."

"I can't, *Hélène*." The voice of Douglas was deeply stirred. "I'm bound in honor—"

"Because I'm his wife, his slave?"

"God, no; not at all! I'm bound to others, who depend on me."

He was glad that she could not see the struggle, the heartache, that was in his face.

"Where has all your laughter gone?" she said wearily. "Do you know why I trusted that Makoa to bring you here? Because he too has suffered. You got his brother away; my husband knew it. Therefore that man has suffered! Upon him was taken out the hatred meant for you. He and I are partners in misery. I've hoped and waited; both of us have, believing that some day you would come back—as my husband also thinks you will. He always looked for your return. You must take us both, this Makoa and me—you *must*!"

"I could take him, but not you," said Douglas. His voice was hoarse, unnatural.

"Why not me?"

"It would ruin things for me. Besides, I couldn't sneak in here and take you; I don't do things in that fashion. I'd have it out with him face to face. No, I can't sneak—"

"Not if he knew you were coming?"

DOUGLAS froze. "What do you mean by that?"

"Tell you later. Is that your only reason for refusing?"

"The least reason of all, to be honest. I'm on a certain mission here. I'm bound to it by every tie of honor. The life and happiness of other men hang on it; they trust me. Wealth hangs on it; not my wealth, but theirs. I'm doing their work.

If I took you away, I'd jeopardize everything, give a handle for charges against them and me. All of us would suffer. I've taken their pay to devote my whole energy to one sole purpose; if I did otherwise, it would be a betrayal."

"I can't understand that attitude," she said. "Will nothing appeal to you, shake you?"

"Nothing."

"You, who always used to laugh at everything—"

"I've learned to laugh with everything, not at it. Listen to me, *Hélène*! I'll come back for the two of you, in a month. I'll make another trip. I can manage it—"

"Impossible," she responded curtly.

THEN she was silent for a space. He could hear her rapid breathing at his side, could sense her torment of spirit. His own was no less.

But there was a practical side to his refusal. Renaud would at once know who had taken Saïd Ali away; pursuit would be implacable, widespread, unrelenting. Whereas otherwise, the French would never know how or whither until the boy reached Cairo, and this was the chief end in view. So Renaud had always feared his return, eh? The brute must have been tormented by that fear.

No, the two things would not mix; on this Douglas found himself adamant, no matter what it might cost him. He could not fail those men who confided in him. Years had gone to build up this confidence, this perfect trust of which he was so proud, and he would not gainsay it by the mad impulse of a moment.

"A month from now, *Hélène*," he said slowly, "I'll be back here. A month isn't long. I'll have it out with him, settle with him—kill him if I must! But I'll arrange it—"

"Be quiet," she said sharply. "All that is quite impossible. You don't understand in the least. Go to the window there at your right; from it you have a view of the town and harbor. Pull aside the curtain and tell me what you see."

Puzzled, Douglas hesitated a moment, then obeyed. He reached the window in the darkness, and bared it. Outstretched below lay a portion of the town, feeble lights glimmering, and beyond this shone the dark harbor under the stars. He could even pick out the riding-lights of the schooner.

"Nothing unusual, *Hélène*."

She laughed a little, mockingly.

"Nothing unusual! Are you such a stranger here, then? Or have you forgotten everything? Look at the signal station, at the shore west of town."

"Ah!" exclaimed Douglas, with a start.

He perceived now what she must mean; the five small harbor leading lights, four of which were visible from this point. These lights were shown only when the *Messag ries* steamer was due, on the 24th and 30th of each month—or when some other vessel was expected.

"Well?" he demanded, turning and coming back to the divan. "The harbor lights, eh? What ship is expected?"

"The patrol cutter from Nosi B , with my husband aboard."

Douglas relaxed, and laughed softly.

"Cheer up, then. Even if he arrives tonight, he'll learn nothing about me. I don't go ashore in the morning; and by noon we'll be gone, so I'm safe enough. As far as you're concerned, it means only a few weeks more. I want him to be here when I take you; by heaven, let him have the whole naval station with him, and I'll still take you! It isn't your last chance by a good deal, H   ne—"

"It's yours, though," she said. Something in the vibrant timbre of her voice checked him, startled him, aroused his quick alarm. He sensed that her inward restraint had snapped. Before he could speak, however, she went on swiftly.

"So you would take away a boy, you'd take a Makoa savage; but you'd not take me?"

"A boy?" Again Douglas felt the sharp stab of uneasiness. "Look here, what do you mean?"

HER low, rich laugh struck through him, half sadly.

"You refuse to take me away from here? Very well; we shall say no more about it. But I shall pay you good for evil, James. Why do you think my husband went to Nosi B ? Because he knew you were coming here. Only, he did not know you'd be here quite so soon."

"He—he knew?" echoed Douglas. "But that's impossible—"

"Bah! That old fool of a Sultan blabbed it one night, after too much cognac and *kif* and hashish—blabbed it to him direct. My husband learned you'd be here at the break of the monsoon to take Sa d Ali away. He flung it at me, taunted me, tortured me with his plan, told me how he'd make sure of you. Now listen carefully."

She paused. Douglas sat as though stupefied by this burst of information.

"He knows you'll come in a sailing vessel, counting on getting clear during the first storms of the monsoon. He boasted that his plan was not to capture you at all, but to destroy you and Sa d Ali together. He intends to smash the hope and pride of the old Sultan, and at the same time remove you, who have been his constant dread. That's his way."

"Down there in the harbor are two dhows, fast ones. He has two others waiting at Bambao, on the other side of the island. With him will come the coast-guard cutter. From her, officers and gun-crews will go to the four dhows, which have guns aboard. The steam cutter heads toward Zanzibar; the four dhows spread out to cut you off. Understand, not to prevent you from leaving; he wants that! They mean to run you down after you've left. The signal station on the peak above will keep them informed of your exact course. Do you comprehend all this?"

"Only too well," said Douglas quietly.

IN this moment, indeed, he knew he was lost; he could see no way out.

Instantly the schooner stood out of the wide-spread bay, the station on the peak of the island, always in communication with the other islands, could keep him in sight for thirty miles or more. Their signals would tell the five pursuers exactly where to find him, no matter how he might change his course. Those dhows were fast as the devil, he knew well. With native seamen, with oars as well as sails, knowing every reef and current as well as he did himself, able to keep the sea in foul weather or fair, they had him trapped.

In whatever direction he might run, they would corner him unavoidably. Those five would be on him like dogs upon a fox, and with as little mercy. Mere capture was one thing, but escape from an implacable enemy determined on his destruction was something else again. And he had walked into this trap so beautifully!

"Good-by, H   ne," said Douglas. He stood up in the darkness, and his hand found hers, with a firm, eager pressure. "Within a month, you may expect me back—if I get away."

"I shall see you before then, perhaps," she said. "*Au revoir!*"

He passed out, whistled softly, and the Makoa led him out of the palace grounds.

Douglas went straight to the bazaar of Ram Chandra. Everything must be abandoned now, all plans laid aside, the scheme given up. Thank heaven he had been warned in time! The Hindu, who alone held all the arrangements between his fingers, could check everything.

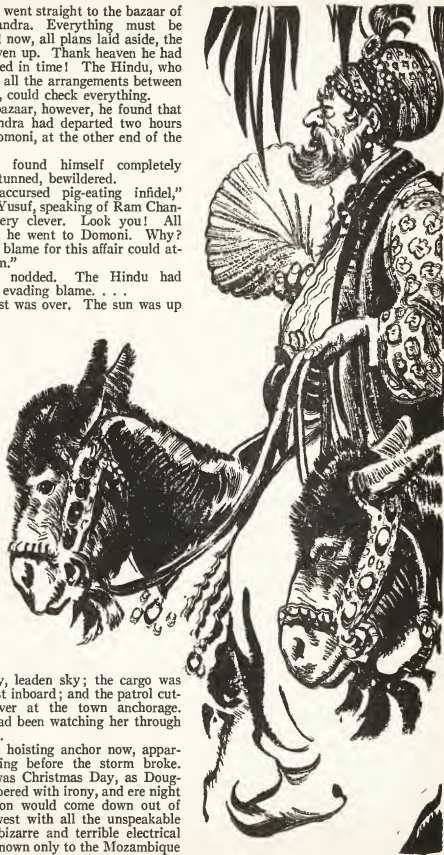
At the bazaar, however, he found that Ram Chandra had departed two hours ago for Domoni, at the other end of the island.

Douglas found himself completely blocked, stunned, bewildered.

"That accursed pig-eating infidel," said Rais Yusuf, speaking of Ram Chandra, "is very clever. Look you! All plans laid, he went to Domoni. Why? So that no blame for this affair could attach to him."

Douglas nodded. The Hindu had spoken of evading blame. . . .

Breakfast was over. The sun was up



in a glassy, leaden sky; the cargo was coming fast inbound; and the patrol cutter lay over at the town anchorage. Douglas had been watching her through the glasses.

She was hoisting anchor now, apparently leaving before the storm broke. For this was Christmas Day, as Douglas remembered with irony, and ere night the monsoon would come down out of the northwest with all the unspeakable fury, the bizarre and terrible electrical displays, known only to the Mozambique channel.



Guards appeared, and behind these came two mules, gayly bedizen. On one rode the Sultan, on the other a slim figure at which Douglas stared hard.

The two dhows hung idle, ready to sail. Aboard them, Rais Yusuf had descried a tarpaulined heap in each bow; guns, no doubt put aboard from the cutter long before daylight. And at daybreak had departed a *boutre*, one of the small sailing craft of the islands. She must have borne the guns and crews for the other two dhows, waiting around on the other side of the island—the base of the triangle that ran due north and south.

"I'm going below," said Douglas abruptly, and turned. "If and when the boy comes, bring him to me."

Rais Yusuf merely stroked his beard and nodded, watching the cutter with anxious eyes. The glass was still falling.

Down in the cabin, Douglas got out his charts and pored over them. Of old he had known every reef and vigia in these waters; each one of the powerful and treacherous currents that whirled about the islands was an old enemy. None of the native pilots, even, had his intimate acquaintance with all such matters. And now he must stake his life upon what he knew. Whether or not Saïd Ali were with him, he and this schooner were slated for destruction. Of this he was assured. And all because a besotted old fool had blabbed!

Even the monsoon, upon which he had

counted, was now against his escape. If he slipped off under cover of storm and then beat up against the northwest wind to the mainland, the cutter would certainly catch him. If he ran before the wind, he could not avoid the Madagascar coast. If he tried to work to the northeast and make the Seychelles, two dhows would head him off. No doubt, he reflected, Renaud had picked the best seamen available, men who would not fear even the hurricanes of the channel.

An hour later, while he was still vainly seeking some way out, feet sounded on the ladder. Rais Yusuf appeared, ushering before him a begrimed figure

clad in filthy native garb. One glance at the face of this stalwart youth, however, and Douglas came to his feet. He extended his hand and spoke in Swahili.

"Welcome, Saïd Ali, and peace be upon you."

"And upon you, peace," responded the boy with dignity despite his appearance.

"I am Rais Douglas. This is my friend Rais Yusuf ben Hamid. We have bad news for you, Saïd Ali; you must return home. For the present, we have to give up the whole attempt. It has become known."

The eyes of the boy flashed, but he said nothing. Douglas laid the situation before him, showing from the chart how the triangular shape of the island precluded any possible evasion of the five sea-wolves awaiting them. Nor did he hide the personal animosity borne him by Renaud, and the intentions of the latter.

"And you?" asked Saïd Ali when he finished. "What shall you do, then?"

"Attempt the impossible," responded Douglas with a shrug. "For us, it does not matter; go or stay, we should be slain. But you cannot be imperiled, my son."

"Allah upon me!" exclaimed Saïd Ali quickly. "May fire cover my head, but not shame! I go with you."

"Not so," spoke up Rais Yusuf. "We are answerable for your safety—"

"I am answerable for myself!" came the proud retort. Douglas perceived that they dealt with a boy indeed, but in this boy was the spirit of past generations. "Nay, the matter is settled, for good or ill. For me any retreat is impossible, even did I wish it. Say no more! By God and His Prophet, I accept your fate as mine."

"I refuse the charge," said Douglas. "You must go ashore."

"Listen to me," broke out the boy, with a certain calm desperation. "Letters have been written and sent, telling whither I go. They cannot be recalled. The Resident will learn everything! If this chance fails, then I shall be sent away to Reunion by the next ship. I win or lose everything with you; do you hear me? It is my only chance."

THERE was a long moment of silence, broken by a muttered oath of admiration from Rais Yusuf. Then Douglas, with a swift warm smile, extended his hand again to the boy.

"Very well; so be it. Rais Yusuf will

show you to your cabin. Leave me to work."

He was alone again—alone, and desperately planning.

RAIS YUSUF went ashore to get his clearance papers. Douglas, going on deck, stowed the last of the cargo. The cutter had moved out, was vanishing over the horizon in a gusty trail of smoke.

The two dhows, stealing forth from the wide bay, were separating; one headed straight out to the westward, the other was making northwest with the wind. The base of this triangled island was a straight line north and south on the other side of the peaks, while the apex pointed to the west.

Douglas had already resolved to head straight north, swerve to the east, round the tip of the island—and head for the north end of Madagascar, to the east. Thus, he would have only the two dhows from around the island to reckon with. If he could give them the slip, well and good; of this, however, he had little hope.

One of the men who had been stationed aloft, came down with word that Rais Yusuf was on the way out in a boat from shore. They could leave at once.

"And something else, Rais," said the man, frowning and pointing to a speck along the great sickle-sweep of the coast to the north. "All the fishing-boats are hauled up; but there yonder is one that has been standing off and on for some time."

"I noticed it,"—and Douglas nodded carelessly. "Some natives going up to the landing at Oani, no doubt, or else to fetch in nets. Call all hands. In with the anchor, and stand by to send up the canvas when Rais Yusuf arrives."

The breeze was brisk, though it would probably die at noon; they were getting away a trifle early. The leaden, hazy sky bore out the prediction of the falling glass. When the storm would come, it was impossible to say. All the fury of the northwest monsoon was gathering to swoop down out of the sky. It might break within the hour, it might hold off until night. But when it came, with it would come the added terror of those tremendous electrical displays peculiar to this locality.

As soon as Rais Yusuf was over the rail, the boat that fetched him put quickly about, anxious to get back. Douglas turned as the Arab joined him.

"If the hurricane comes swiftly, we have a chance; otherwise, none. In that

case, are you willing to sacrifice the schooner in order to get clear?"

"Eh? I do not see how—but yes, of course! Life is better than death. Besides," added Rais Yusuf slyly, "the Sultan's agent promised to reimburse me if the schooner was lost."

Douglas broke into a laugh, and sent orders blaring down the deck. The six men and cook already bringing in the anchor and sending up the jib. The lateen sails of the two dhows were low on the horizon to west and northwest.

"Did the two bundles come aboard with the provisions?" asked Douglas.

"Below with the boy," said Rais Yusuf. "The course?"

"Northwest with the breeze for a little; then wear and lay her over suddenly for the north end of the island."

With a nod, the Arab took the helm. Douglas sprang to lend his weight on the lines; the canvas was fluttering up, bellying out. The schooner canted over a little to the thrust, gathered a bone in her teeth, and leaped through the water like a bounding deer.

Douglas swore under his breath as he stood at the rail, awaiting the right moment to wear. With this schooner he had counted on doing much; stowed below were extra spars, extra canvas; for she could carry sail like a yacht. Now, however, all his plans were cast adrift, for shellfire could outspeed her; and with the hurricane coming at any moment, extra canvas were folly. It was one thing to sweep in and go dashing away, matching ship and wits with pursuers; it was quite another thing to try to break out of a steel trap.

No, he must resort now, Douglas knew, to the last desperate gamble. He had made some slight preparation against such a contingency, but only a slight one. It was life or death, with the cards stacked against him. And as he knew well, his one and only slim chance now was to fall afoul of a dhow that did not have Renaud aboard.

"WHERE is the suitcase I brought aboard at Zanzibar?" he demanded. "You took it, Yusuf."

"Stowed under my bunk," said the Arab.

Douglas nodded. "Right. Wear, then! And haul her close up for the island tip."

The Arab's voice rang out. The mainsail swung in. The schooner put about, abandoned her course, and lay over un-

til her lee rail was a hissing welter of rushing foam, as she went racing for the north.

"By Allah!" yelled Rais Yusuf suddenly. "What is that boat yonder? She is making signals to us!"

"To hell with her; we have our own troubles," snapped Douglas—but looked, none the less. The small boat, previously noticed, was certainly standing out as though to intercept the new course of the schooner, and a figure in the bow was waving a length of cloth.

"What the devil!" exclaimed Douglas in astonishment. "Anyone could imagine that she had guessed our course and was waiting for us! Here, give me your binoculars." He took the Arab's glasses and focused on the boat ahead, now a scant quarter-mile distant.

AFTER a moment, Douglas lowered the glasses. He stood as though stupefied for an instant, then swung around on Rais Yusuf.

"Take the glasses. Look! If you see what I see—"

The mystified Arab seized the glasses, while Douglas held the schooner steady.

"A woman and a man, Rais; a Makoa!" exclaimed Yusuf. "The man is signaling us. The woman—may the angel seize my forelock!—the woman is knocking loose a plank! Aye, the water is pouring into their boat! What madness is this?"

"No madness," said Douglas in a bitter voice. "Determination! Here, take the wheel. I'll get forward and pick them up."

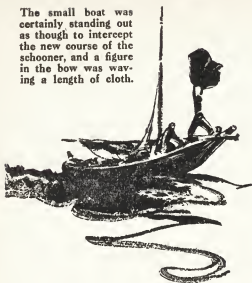
Speeding forward, he summoned two of the men. All the crew now perceived that the boat must be picked up; they were wondering, alert, suspicious, wary of some trap. Douglas alone knew that it was no trap, and making ready a line, he watched the small boat with flinty gaze. Now he understood her parting words about seeing him soon. She was forcing him to take her off, forcing him by smashing out that plank in the boat.

Despite himself, admiration and a joyous wonder softened his hard gaze. What a woman she was! He might have done exactly the same thing in her place, gambling hard and desperately for life or death. That boat was waterlogged now, half sinking.

In this mood he flung the line to the Makoa.

Rais Yusuf handled the schooner like the master seaman he was. She turned,

The small boat was certainly standing out as though to intercept the new course of the schooner, and a figure in the bow was waving a length of cloth.



swooped, poised like a bird in flight with the boat under her counter. The Makoa came over the rail like a cat. Douglas stooped, caught the hand of Hélène, pulled her up, just as the schooner filled again and went rushing away on her course. He clapped the Makoa on the shoulder and spoke to the wondering Arabs.

"A friend! Make him one of you. Although an infidel, he is a chief."

He beckoned to Hélène and strode aft. She followed with some little difficulty, since the lee rail was awash and the deck sharply canted. But upon reaching the helm, she caught hold of the spokes opposite Rais Yusuf and held herself up. Douglas saw that she was laughing, her eyes eager with joy and excitement.

"Last night this woman, who is my cousin, wanted me to take her away," said Douglas in Swahili. "I refused. Now she has made me do it."

"Not she," said the Arab shrewdly. "Allah alone is the dispenser of all things, Rais, and no man can escape the destiny meted out by the angel. By Allah, I wish such a woman would ask me to take her! She is worth it."

Hélène broke into another laugh, looking from one to the other of them.

"Do you think I know no Swahili?" she asked in that tongue. "Well, James, I see that you are not angry with me, after all."

Douglas shook his head. "It's as Rais Yusuf says, I suppose," he returned helplessly. "What is written, is written. I hadn't thought of it that way. You know we've practically no chance at all?"

"No matter," she said coolly. "Death comes only once. Let my husband have supreme defeat or a perfect victory; I'm content with the wager, since you're pitted against him."

"You do me too much honor," said Douglas sardonically.

"Your husband, woman?" broke in Rais Yusuf, looking hard at her. "Who is he?"

"Captain Renaud," she answered.

"*Bismillah!*" ejaculated the Arab, and gave Douglas a long look. "Now I begin to see a few things that have been puzzling me. Excellent, Rais, excellent! For the first time, I am better satisfied with things."

"Why?" asked Douglas, astonished.

The other grinned. "Because, by God and the Prophet, you will now fight with tenfold energy! And a woman like this is worth a death-grapple."

Somehow, Douglas felt that the Arab was right.

The admiration of Rais Yusuf was justified. With the sharp breeze whipping her cloak about her, Hélène Renaud was more lovely than most women; she was more lovely, too, than the girl Douglas had known five years ago. For now she had the developed surety, the poise, that comes to a woman from sorrow and anger and the need of battling against the world.

A NET held in her mass of yellow hair. Below it her face was delicate, high-carven, her starry eyes alight with eagerness. Her long body was firm, supple—eloquent, like her face, of strength as well as beauty. She turned suddenly to Douglas.

"I have news for you! He came last night; I saw him for only five minutes, but it was enough. He knew you were here. He taunted me, struck me. He was like a maniac. Look!" and loosening the cape at her throat, she showed bluish marks on the white skin.

"He had already guessed just what you would do," she went on eagerly. "He sent out the other ships to make certain you would not escape that way; but he himself went around the island, to the two dhows waiting there. He said you would go around the island to the north—and he wanted to meet you himself, head you off, sink you and destroy you!"

All this was said in rapid French, which Rais Yusuf understood perfectly. A blaze leaped in his eyes as he looked at Douglas.

"Good, Rais, good!" he cried out. "Then we can cheat him after all! We can head straight out west across the channel—"

"With those two dhows and the cutter waiting?" cut in Douglas. "Not a bit of it. That cutter is the chief danger. No, we shall do exactly as he foresaw, up to a certain point. I'll not be sorry to meet him; it is better so. If we knew which dhow would carry him—"

"I know!" broke in Hélène. "It is a black one, a Majunga dhow, with a gun forward and another in the stern. He likes her because she is small and fast; he owns an interest in her, too."

"Good!" exclaimed Douglas, swift animation in his eyes. "Now, Hélène, get out of our way. Stay here if you like, but don't interfere or talk. And when I give the order, you get below quickly and stay there, if I can't take you."

"Very well," she assented quietly, and moved over to the weather rail, away from them.

All this while, the schooner was rushing northward toward Saddle Rock, the reef off the northwest tip of the island. Douglas looked out ahead, squinted at the horizon, and then took over the helm from Rais Yusuf.

"No sign of the storm yet awhile," he said. "Unluckily, the wind's going down, ahead of us. A good thing we have that Makoa! We'll need every hand at the lines. You told me at Zanzibar that you had some rifles hidden aboard?"

"Yes, Rais," answered Rais Yusuf. "In a secret compartment of the hold. But what good are rifles against guns?"

"Much, in the right hands," said Douglas grimly. "Go you and get them ready. And assign two men to take charge of those bundles belonging to Saïd Ali, in case we abandon ship."

THE Arab started, gave him a searching look.

"As Allah liveth! You are not going to run her ashore?"

Douglas broke into a laugh. "Not I! But neither am I going to Zanzibar, nor to hell, if I can stay on this earth!"

"Amen to that, Rais," and Yusuf departed, grinning.

A man was sent aloft. He reported no sign of the cutter's smoke on the horizon. While the two dhows were now both heading north, proving that they were aware of the schooner's changed course, they were too distant to be factors in whatever might happen here. It

was a scant five miles to the tip of Anjouan, which the schooner at her present speed would cover in twenty minutes or less—but out beyond the tongue of land, the sea showed a falling breeze, almost a calm.

Douglas cursed despairingly, although he had known the wind would fail with noon. Storm might possibly save him; but the hurricane was holding off. With any sort of breeze he might at least put up a seamanly fight for it. In a dead calm, however, the schooner was a helpless victim, unable to move, while the dhows had sweeps. With every moment it seemed that destiny was putting forth some fresh claw to rip away what hope remained to him.

True, he had one weapon and one alone. And in a dead calm that weapon might prove of supreme help, instead of a mere despairing stroke at his enemies. But it could be used only once, perhaps not at all. Everything was fluid, dependent on what the minute would bring forth. Blast the whole shabby business! Renaud had been too smart for him, that was the truth of it. Too crafty and vindictive. How he must have come to hate the very thought of Douglas during these five years!

NOW they were reaching out to pass Saddle Rock, and Douglas reflected swiftly. Although Renaud had guessed his course aright, he could not be certain and would therefore take no chances. One dhow would be down toward the south tip, in case the schooner came that way. The other dhow would be here off the north end—probably the black Majunga dhow, with Renaud in command of her. A fierce eagerness shot through the veins of Douglas. He glanced around to see Rais Yusuf approaching.

"The rifles are ready, Rais! One for the Makoa also."

"Stand by to give me a hand with the wheel," said Douglas. "Everything hinges now on what we find. I predict the Majunga dhow will be ready for us."

"May Allah avert the omen!" muttered Yusuf in his beard.

Another moment and they were reaching out opposite the sharp pointed tip of the island, and beyond it. Hélène still stood at the weather rail, but Douglas saw her not, heeded neither her nor anyone else. His whole attention was fiercely centered on what lay ahead. He handled the spokes mechanically, waiting like everyone else, all attention cen-

tered on what would be raised when the sharp promontory fell away.

One of the men forward saw it first, let out a shrill yell. There was the black Majunga dhow—not close in to the island, but off to the northeast, a good two miles to seaward, tacking up as though to cut them off.

Douglas studied her for an instant, verified her course, and then turned to gaze southward. The other dhow appeared five miles down the coast, likewise reaching up for the north and her prey. And here beyond the island, the wind was dying rapidly, coming now only in fitful puffs.

"Hold the course, Yusuf," said Douglas unexpectedly, and left the wheel to the Arab.

Feet wide apart, braced to the heave and thrust of the deck, he studied first one enemy through the binoculars, then the other. Here was the moment of decision. The crisis impended now, at this instant, when he must make his plan for good or ill.

Swiftly he weighed every chance, every detail. Within the leaden sky the sun hung like a brazen-red ball, and distant lightning was streaking the northwest—not in flashes and sharp crepitations, but in silent, lingering flares of pale light. The monsoon was about to break; whether in ten minutes or an hour, was impossible to forecast. The southeast wind failed and the schooner swung to an even keel. The second dhow, down the coast, was bringing up the last puffs.

AS he gazed, hope died out within his heart; for to the last, against all conviction, he had thought he might be wrong, that he would meet the other dhow first. His scant shred of a plan had depended wholly upon that. For he was confident that, all orders to the contrary, only Renaud would deliberately destroy him.

Only Renaud would possess the vindictive, bitter personal hatred that could cause him to open fire on a defenseless craft and blow her out of the water, with the intent of sinking every soul aboard her. And now it was with Renaud that he must deal after all; for the black Majunga dhow was racing to cut him off.

The decision was made. Douglas lowered the glasses and looked at Yusuf, who was watching him expectantly, anxiously.

"Steady as she is," he said calmly. "The Majunga dhow is smaller than the

other, but fast as the devil. Keep the course."

"But she is heading for us, Rais!"

"No." Douglas smiled thinly. "We are heading for her, rather."

SUDDENLY Hélène was at his side, catching at his arm, turning him.

"Do you know that he is aboard that dhow?" she exclaimed. "He has used her before; he will be on her now!"

Douglas met her wide, startled eyes with a quiet nod.

"I hope so," he said. "In ten minutes she'll open fire. In twenty minutes she'll either be alongside us—or we'll be sunk. That's the gamble."

His gaze dwelt steadily upon her. Only the compression of his lips, the thin whiteness about his nostrils, told of the strain he was under. She drew back a pace, staring at him, then broke into a quick, low laugh.

"All right, my dear!" she said. "Either way!"

Douglas turned and met the look of Rais Yusuf,—the tortured, wild, fierce eyes driving into him,—and under his gaze the Arab relaxed a little.

"By Allah and Allah! Can man escape his destiny? Give the orders, Rais."

"Steady as she is." Douglas turned and beckoned. "Come, Hélène! Time to go below."

He passed down the companionway without awaiting her, peered into one cabin after another, then saw Saïd Ali sitting on a bunk and looking at him. No longer was the boy a filthy native workman, but was now dressed in splendid garments from the open bundle at his feet.

"News, Rais Douglas?" he demanded. Then he caught side of Hélène in the passage behind Douglas, and his eyes widened suddenly.

"Aye. Come into the main cabin. I leave this woman in your charge. What ever happens, remain below until I send for you. It is life or death, and much depends on obedience."

"I, too, have given orders, Rais; thus I have learned to obey," said the boy proudly.

That he recognized Hélène was evident in his look, but he made no comment, uttered no word to her, merely passed into the main cabin and sat there on the lee cushions. The schooner was heeling over again under a puff of wind. Douglas turned to Hélène, met her eyes, and his hand touched hers for a moment.

"For good or ill—*au revoir!*" he said.

"*Au revoir,*" she replied quietly.

So Douglas left them. He took a key from his pocket, darted to the cabin of Rais Yusuf, and from beneath the bunk pulled a large suitcase. He unlocked it, flung it open. Here was a mass of stuff he had brought along—everything from false passports to extra pistols.

He carefully felt in the midst, pulled away clothes tightly packed around two square boxes of corrugated board, and extricated the boxes with a look of satisfaction. Each was eight inches square. He picked up the boxes and rose. The deck was again on an even keel; the puff of wind had died out.

As he came to the foot of the ladder, he caught the dull report of a gun. A six-pounder, from the sound.

He came to the deck, his voice reaching out at Rais Yusuf. The latter barked sharp orders. The flapping canvas was hauled in.

"She fired across our bows, Rais!" called the Arab excitedly.

DOUGLAS nodded, an unusual pallor in his countenance as he looked at the Majunga dhow. For life or death, the die was cast. The dhow was a scant half-mile distant, and she had also lost the wind, but her sweeps were out and pulling. To south and east, the sea was becoming glassy; the breeze had died out completely. The second dhow, though still far away, was creeping slowly along with her sweeps flashing in regular strokes.

Putting down his two boxes under the rail, Douglas straightened up. Would Renaud sink the schooner offhand? Everything depended on this. He glimpsed three white figures in the bow of the oncoming Majunga, a score of natives at her sweeps, others standing at her rail with rifles aglint. No one was tending her after gun.

Suddenly his tense calm was broken. He darted at Rais Yusuf, seized the binoculars, focused them on the black dhow. A frenzy of incredulous emotion gripped him. The three Frenchmen were waiting, stood motionless beside the brass gun. A petty officer and two men, alone. He swept the deck of the dhow with the glasses, then lowered them.

Renaud was not aboard the Majunga dhow after all!

A sudden blaze of energy in his eyes, Douglas turned to the Arab—then staggered. . . . Without the least warning

occurred one of those amazing and incredible phenomena for which these waters were famous—or rather, infamous.

All about the schooner, across the water between her and the dhow, came a blinding flash of light. There was a sharp coruscating crackle. Hissing electricity was everywhere ablaze, filling the air; no bolt from above, but as it were a great outburst of fluid light. Then it had vanished, leaving every man shocked and speechless, immobile for a long moment.

"Allah!" burst forth the cry from forward, a cry of sheer fright. "Allah!"

Douglas recovered, looked down at the two boxes, remembered everything. He leaped into life and action, as he saw the black dhow sweeping onward.

"Quick, Yusuf! Drop everything!" he cried. "Get forward with your men. Have the rifles ready under the rail, but don't use them unless we're fired upon, understand? No killing unless we're forced to it. Leave matters to me!"

Rais Yusuf wiped sweat from his face and beard, and went stumbling forward.

Douglas stooped, tore open the two boxes, and scattered sawdust on the deck from them. He straightened up with a glass sphere in each hand; as he held them, they were invisible. He stood there openly by the rail, as the schooner listlessly drifted, her canvas braild up. The men clumped forward in the bows, along the rail, in plain sight.

The Majunga dhow drove in upon her quarry, the long sweeps flashing, sending her swiftly across the glassy water. She too had been momentarily dazed and blinded by that furious electric burst. Far off to starboard leaped out a flash and a blaze, as another coruscating fire shone out and was gone again.

TENSE, motionless, Douglas stood, as the black dhow came closer, then turned to come alongside. He could see the eyes of the natives rolling up at him. He encountered the alert looks of the officer and two men at the bow gun, and heard a hail in French. Most of the brown men were at the oars, with rifles ready beside them. Half a dozen stood ready to fire. An order came from the petty officer. The brown skipper hailed the Arabs on the schooner's deck and threw a line.

Rais Yusuf caught it. He hesitated and looked at Douglas, who gave no sign; then he made the line fast. The dhow swung in. Her crew abandoned

their oars, seized their rifles, and gathered along the rail ready to board.

A moment before the two craft came together, Douglas threw up his arm. He hurled one of the glass spheres, then the other. The first struck forward, beside the gun; the second fell amidships, full among the crowded men, with a tinkle of shattered glass.

The petty officer cried out in sudden alarm, but too late. As the bulwarks crashed together, a frightful chorus of yells, shrieks, cries echoed up from the brown men crowded there. The gas from those shattered glass balls curled around them, choking, invisible. Tear-gas, no more; but enough to paralyze all their actions. The three whites were staggering, blinded, helpless.

Rifles exploded. Rais Yusuf and his men brought up their concealed weapons, opened fire.

Some of the brown men were shooting; bullets were whistling across the schooner's deck and pinging into her rail. But sudden blind panic and fright seized upon those men. They broke back, flung down their arms, and ran for shelter. No heroes were they, seeing their white leaders helpless, and mysterious death, as they deemed it, striking all around them. Terror of the unknown filled their hearts.

"Board, Rais?" yelled Yusuf hoarsely.

Douglas lifted his hand, shook it in negation. At this, Yusuf came running aft, bawling out frantic pleas to board the dhow. When the Arab came close, Douglas raised his head, which had sunk on his breast.

"Make fast the lines," he said dully, the animation gone out of his face. "I had two gas bombs, no more. Herd those sheep down below and fasten the hatches on them. Tie up the whites, take their caps, roll them out of the way. It should be safe enough now."

YUSUF turned and shouted. Two of his men leaped aboard the Majunga dhow, which was decked fore and aft. The brown men offered no further resistance but let themselves be driven below and confined, taking with them those who stumbled about in agony. Two or three bodies remained, for Yusuf had shot to kill.

A puff of wind came and died. Then another. Safe enough now to board her, yet Douglas said nothing. His brain felt dull, his thoughts were in a whirl. Somehow his whole plan must be changed; he had realized it as the firing began but

now it eluded him. He could not grasp what must be done.

He had meant to seize the dhow, then shell the schooner and sink her. The other dhow would come up before suspecting anything amiss and then would catch it hot and heavy from the guns. But now—no, no! It must all be changed. Some detail had occurred, altering everything, but he could not fix his mind upon it. He seemed slipping.

Of a sudden Yusuf turned and peered sharply.

"By Allah! There is blood coming through your jacket!"

"Yes." Douglas spoke out desperately, with a great effort. "You must understand, Yusuf—take me over there beside that bow gun. Have two men don the caps and jackets of the French—don't abandon the schooner after all! Changed the plan—tell you later—"

With this, he staggered. His voice died out, and he would have fallen forward had not Yusuf caught and lowered him to the deck.

WHEN he came to his senses, he was on the forward gun-platform aboard the dhow, whose long black shape was still alongside the schooner, on the side toward the second dhow. The bodies had disappeared. Rais Yusuf, looking grotesque in the cap and jacket of the petty officer, was leaning above him.

The two craft were gently crunching together in the glassy swell. Yusuf was getting a bandage and compress in place, over the left side of Douglas. Another Arab, wearing the cap of a French seaman, was helping him.

"So, Rais, awake now?" exclaimed Yusuf. "A little higher; right! The bullet broke a rib, tore out some flesh and skin, and passed on its way. Nothing to worry about. Young Omar was killed. Steady, now! Nearly finished."

"Good man," said Douglas faintly. "Well, we were wrong. He's aboard the other dhow; I mean Renaud. How far away?"

"Nearly two miles, but driving on fast."

"The woman? Saïd Ali?"

"Still below, on the schooner. There, it is finished."

"Help me up."

Douglas came to his feet. His mind was clear now. It all rushed over him suddenly; the brown men down below! There was the thing that had eluded him. No doubt binoculars from the other

dhow were trained on them by this time. Renaud would be watching.

"Quick, Yusuf!" His voice broke out fiercely urgent with returning strength. "Throw those discarded rifles overboard. Get out the prisoners, beat them out, set them at the oars! Get the schooner between us and that dhow, or turn both ships—swiftly! Before they realize the truth!"

A wild blaze of comprehension leaped in the eyes of Yusuf. He leaped away, yelling at his men. Douglas sagged back against the rail, then relaxed to its support and glanced about. The deck of the schooner was bare. One man dead; but the Makoa would make up that loss. There was no faintest breath of wind, and the water was like molten glass. The sky was turning yellow—a bad sign.

From their shelter below, brown men erupted, driven forth to the sweeps. Two of the Arabs clambered aboard the schooner to handle the lines. The dhow began to move as the oars went out, and gradually crept around. Rais Yusuf came back to the gun-platform.

"If the storm breaks now, Rais—"

"It won't break in time; that dhow is coming up fast." Douglas spoke with his old crisp energy. "Our only chance is to catch her off-guard. What kind of a gun is that aft?"

"A mitrailleuse. An old type."

"Can you work it?"

"Yes, by Allah!" A fierce blaze flared in the eyes of the Arab. "Then you mean to let her come close?"

"Of course. Send me two men here, to handle the shells for this gun. I'm able to manage it. We must disable her, sweep her rowers with your fire, and then get aboard the schooner. If we fail, she'll draw off and sink us. We must cripple her with the first burst. Explain everything to your men—"

Rais Yusuf was already gone.

NOW the sweeps were dipping more strongly. The long black dhow was brought around, until the schooner partially concealed her from sight of those aboard the oncoming dhow.

"James!"

Douglas, who had sat down to examine the gun, also to conceal his face and figure from the binoculars of Renaud, glanced up. He saw the face of Hélène at the port window of the schooner's cabin, and waved his hand.

"All's well!" he called cheerily. She was not ten feet away. "He was not



The dhow was close. "Yusuf! Fire!" Renaud was caught, yes, but too late to be stopped.

aboard here after all. Make fast everything below there, will you? The hurricane will break any minute, and we'll need everything tight. And both of you stay there until I come."

Her face vanished, and the port was screwed shut. Thank the Lord, muttered Douglas, for that kind of a woman!

RAIS YUSUF was in charge now. He knew exactly how to manipulate the dhow so that Renaud would suspect nothing amiss. Still made fast with two lines, she was slowly backed out astern of the schooner. The brown men were intimidated, kept cowed at their sweeps. Douglas and the two Arabs who had come to help him were stretched out beside their gun, waiting. As he lay looking up at the sky, he saw a tremendous burst of electricity off to starboard—a silent flare, yet sending the air in shuddering waves all around.

Off to the northwest, a tiny patch of white glittered in the sky. One of the Arabs saw it and cried out sharply. Douglas sat up and looked over the rail. The monsoon was breaking at last—it was only a matter of minutes! But too late to intervene. A cloudy haze surrounded the peak of Anjouan; the signal station there had long been lost to sight. Off to the westward was a curl of smoke. The cutter was coming up, but was still under the horizon. She would never sight the schooner now.

And the other dhow was within a quarter-mile, sweeps dipping rapidly, surging her along over the glassy water.

Sudden pandemonium burst forth in the waist of the Majunga dhow. The brown men there, sighting that white patch in the sky, seeing it rapidly swell and enlarge, bleated with fear; their chorus of wild cries was roughly silenced by Rais Yusuf and his men, waiting to jump to the machine-gun aft.

Douglas started to rise, opened his lips to give the order to Yusuf. And at this instant, when everything hinged on action at exactly the right moment, there was a terrific crash that rocked both ships. A thunderbolt this time, a bolt from that yellowish leaden sky above; then another and another, as though some awful power were hurling them directly at the drifting ships. All around they struck, to right and left. Douglas felt the deck shiver beneath him to the blazing fusillade. Electricity filled the air. The repeated shocks deafened every ear, paralyzed every arm, filled

every brain with sound and fury. The tremendous white flashes blinded every eye.

Yet neither ship was struck.

The brown men had flung themselves down. They huddled together in the waist, their voices rising like faint rattles after those terrific detonations. Douglas sat up, then staggered to his feet, and a despairing oath came to his lips. The second dhow was close, so close that she was swinging about, the oars lifted on one side. So close that he could see every detail aboard her, brown men and French standing ready, guns manned.

"Yusuf! Fire!"

His cry pealed aft, as he sank down to his gun. Renaud was caught, yes, but too late to be stopped. At this close distance, there was no missing. Sighting his gun, Douglas caught the sudden scurry of men aboard her as Renaud perceived his awful error, and for an instant he saw Renaud standing in the stern, shouting orders. Then the gun under his hand exploded, and the shell went slap into the bows of the enemy.

At the same moment, Rais Yusuf's mitrailleuse began its spiteful barking.

Another shell was slid into the breech, the block swung shut; another explosion rocked the deck. The gun platform on the other dhow flew asunder as the shell struck. Yells and shrieks filled the air—Yusuf was raking the whole crowded deck with his flowing stream of bullets. That dhow was wrecked, crippled, disabled; but she was not stopped. Of her own impetus she drove on, for the side of the schooner.

Then Douglas was frantically shouting at his men, awake to disaster.

THE two Arabs aboard the schooner hauled on the lines. The brow of the Majunga dhow crept in beneath the counter of the schooner, and Douglas joined the wild scramble of the Arabs to get aboard.

He looked over his shoulder again. No doubt of it—everything else was forgotten now, swept away! The white patch filled the whole sky. Down from the horizon was sweeping a black line, a wall of water. In the air was a humming, a strident whistling roar that increased with every second.

The monsoon was breaking. And as Douglas came to the schooner's deck, with the strong arm of Yusuf aiding him, the crippled, shrieking dhow of Renaud crashed alongside.

With an unearthly roar, the wall of water and spume was upon them.

In this frightful moment it was impossible to realize coherently what was happening.

The three vessels, crashing together, reeled and rocked. The hissing, roaring spray covered them completely. The wind, bursting down with tremendous velocity, tore at them as they huddled for an instant, then wrenched and whirled them apart like chips.

And in this indescribable chaos, Douglas desperately caught a handline at the lee rail as the schooner canted over. He barely saved himself from going completely over the side in the smother. Then, almost at his very elbow, he dimly visioned another figure—a man who had come leaping for the main shrouds, who was clinging there like a leech, then drooping away.

A FAINT cry from this other man reached Douglas. He turned, saw that the man still held by one hand, his body blown out from the rail by the terrific blast of wind. His contorted face stared into that of Douglas.

It was the face of Renaud!

Like a flash, knowing all too well what he was doing, Douglas reached out his free hand and caught that of the Frenchman, and drew Renaud to a safe grip beside him. The two of them clung there. The wind whipped the breath out of them, while the schooner heeled farther and farther over. The two dhows were lost to sight in the welter of spray and water and hissing froth.

Whether any of the three craft would survive, was doubtful.

The schooner heeled over farther, until her weather rail and the deck above gave the two clinging men surcease from the furious wind and spray. Douglas caught his breath as he met the strained, tense, tortured gaze of Renaud. In this moment, with the wind roaring overhead, with death opening beneath them, their eyes spoke all they were unable to utter aloud.

And then, swiftly as it had come, the first blast of the hurricane passed.

The hissing roar of water and foam was gone. The wind was gone. The two dhows were gone—whether sunk or whirled away to leeward, none could say. Slowly the schooner swung back to a level keel.

In the intense and terrible silence that now fell, in the obscurity that had cov-

ered the heavens and everything around, Douglas caught the voice of Rais Yusuf from up forward. The Arab was trying to get a rag of sail spread before the main fury of the tempest came sweeping down.

Renaud moved. His hand went under his coat as he stared at Douglas, a frightful spasm of hatred contorting his face. He opened his mouth to speak.

His words were drowned in a deafening burst of thunder, a tremendous smashing impact of blinding light that shook the ship like a leaf. The deck and spars and rigging were outlined in liquid fire, hanging in great balls. Douglas felt the hair lifted on his head, felt his body twisted and shaken by the electric fluid. With a chill of unutterable horror, he saw the face and figure of Renaud painted in a greenish blaze, the distended eyes still staring at him, the lips still parted in a contorted grimace.

The blinding light was gone. An instant of contrasting darkness. This was split by a terrific concussion as a thunderbolt hit the water close by. In the intense and intolerable glare of white radiance, Douglas was knocked to the deck, sent sprawling headlong—but he saw that the figure of Renaud was no longer at the rail. The place was empty.

Douglas rose. Rais Yusuf came rushing aft with two men. Again a strident, sibilant roar was swooping down out of the sky. The schooner was struck, whirled around, sent driving away by the scrap of canvas forward. As the Arabs sprang to help him, Douglas looked back and thought he could descry a white shape amid the foam and spray.

Then it disappeared.

IN the shelter of the companion hood, Douglas paused, put his lips to the ear of the Arab who supported him.

"Tell him,"—and he motioned toward Rais Yusuf, who was braced at the helm,—"to head for the Seychelles. Hold her up to west by north—clear Madagascar! I'll work out a course."

The Arab nodded and reached to draw the hood shut.

Douglas passed on down to the cabin and those who awaited him there. He staggered, and leaned against the wall for support. Renaud was dead, yes; despite everything, Douglas felt shocked and filled with unutterable horror.

Then he went on, and threw open the door of the main cabin, to give his news to those awaiting him.



Big Jim

The famous hero of the North meets the champion of the West to decide which is the better man.

NOW, it happened that Big Jim Turner found himself with a herd of wild steers on his hands down in the Texas country. An' these were not ordinary steers. There was no time of the day or night that they couldn't be found a-pawin' an' a-snortin' an' lookin' for a fight. There were a lot of mountain-lions in that Pecos River country, an' Big Jim, bein' a good cowman, used to try an' hunt 'em down. Then one day when he was a-trailin' one, he came out on a little flat, an' there were two of his outlaw steers a-tossin' the lion back an' forth on their horns. So Big Jim rode up an' knocked their heads together just to remind 'em not to play so rough next time, an' he didn't worry no more about mountain-lions.

But presently Jim's cattle got to be so ornery they took to gorin' the tame cows on the ranches thereabouts. One day Jim was a-lyin' in front of his tent, enjoyin' the sun, when a whole posse of cowmen came a-ridin' up.

"Big Jim," said one of 'em, "those critters of yours are doin' more damage to our herds than all the rustlers on the Rio Grande. We came to tell you to trail 'em out of here."

With that, Jim rose up, a-rarin' an' full of fight. "I'm Big Jim Turner from the Wind River country, where the men all grow eighteen hands high," said he, "an' no man livin' can face me down. I cut my teeth on a six-gun handle, an' I can turn a grizzly bear wrong-side-out by reachin' down his throat an' grabbin' a-holt of his tail. But I'm a good cowman, an' I'll see no harm come to your herds. Besides which, I got the itchin' foot, so I'll jest trail my critters north."

"But you haven't got no 'punchers, Big Jim," said the cowmen. "An' how you goin' to trail your critters north when you haven't got no 'punchers?"

"Watch me," said Big Jim, an' gave a whistle. Presently his blue roan mare, that was smarter than most men an' could turn on a dime, came a-lopin' into sight, an' stood for him to saddle her with his silver-mounted saddle. Then they all rode down through the mesquite brush to where Jim's outlaw steers were a-grazin' in a big swale. When the critters saw the cowmen, they started pawin' the ground, because they had never let any man handle 'em but Big Jim Turner.

So Big Jim motioned to the cowmen to stay back while he rode down into the valley. He rode right up to where the leader of the herd stood a-snortin', an' there he stopped. Then he began to sing a song. It wasn't a loud song, an' it wasn't a soft song, but it was a kind of an in-between song. It told about Big Jim's home range up North on the Lazy K Bar—about little calves rompin' in knee-deep prairie grass, while a summer breeze sighed through the jack-pines on the ridges. It told about a great green valley where steers could eat their fill, an' could drink from a crystal-clear spring. There weren't any brandin'-irons, the song said, nor any wolves, nor any mountain-lions. Big Jim began to sway a little in the saddle as he sang, an' presently the old outlaw mosshorn leader's eyes half-closed, an' he began to sway a little, too. Before long the whole herd lined up in trail formation, an' when Big Jim turned the nose of his blue roan mare north, the outlaw steers followed right behind, a-listenin' to his chant. So that's how Big Jim started his herd north without any cowpunchers.

Well sir, Jim rode along on his blue roan mare, that could make a hundred miles a day an' never turn a hair, an' the old mosshorn followed behind, leadin' the rest of the herd. They got along fine until they came to the banks of the

vs. Paul Bunyan

By BEN
NEWCOMER

Illustrated by
Frank Hoban



Little Muddy River. The Little Muddy was bank-high, an' a-roarin' like a forest in a hurricane. Big Jim took one look at it, threw a loop over the horns of the old leader steer, an' dallied to his saddle-horn.

"Scared of 'er, Blue?" he said. But his blue roan mare just snorted an' struck out for the far bank, a-towin' the mosshorn leader. An' each one of those outlaw steers grabbed the tail of the one ahead in his mouth. Well sir, inside of fifteen minutes the whole herd was on the north bank of the Little Muddy, an' was stringin' out on the trail again. The sun was a-shinin', an' the meadow-larks were all a-makin' music from the sagebrush tops. Big Jim's silver-trimmed chaps were a-flappin' in the breeze, an' he was plumb happy, so he began singin' the song that 'punchers have sung ever since while drivin' up from Texas:

*Here we go a-rollin' up the Chisholm Trail,
Two thousand steers a-bellerin', an' followin' nose to tail.*

*We don't know where we're goin', but
we're sure a-makin' time,
An' we're goin' to git to Kansas, if we
never make a dime.*

*Roll along, roll along,
Roll along, little dogies, roll along.*

*For we're goin' to git to Kansas, if we
never make a dime.*

An' that's how Big Jim Turner brought the first herd of longhorn steers out of Texas. He sold his herd to a buyer out of Abilene, an' hung around a spell. Then he began to get the itchin' foot again. "'Cause," he said, "I'm Big Jim Turner from the Lazy K Bar; an' I want to git back to the Wind River country where the men all grow eighteen hands high, an' every baby 'puncher cuts his teeth on a six-gun handle." So he climbed aboard his blue roan mare an' started driftin'.

Everywhere he went, people came to

wonder at the color of his mare, but mostly they let him alone, because they'd heard how he was born with a gun in each hand. But one day he came a-swingin' into the town of Elkhorn, an' never a soul did he see on the main street. He rode along, wonderin' where all the people could be, an' presently he saw an old man a-scuttin' across the road like a cottontail huntin' for cover. "Where's the fire?" asked Big Jim. "An' where's all the citizens o' this here village?"

"Stranger, aint you heard?" said the old man. "Windy Bill's in town, an' he's on the prod. You better git out o' sight afore you look like a sieve."

"An' whereat might I find this playful gent named Windy Bill?" inquired Jim.

"Down at the Ace-high Saloon, a-drinkin' red likker," replied the old man, duckin' into a doorway.

"Well," said Big Jim to himself, "I haven't done no shootin' for so long my gun is like to rust. Come on, Blue!" An' he rode up to the Ace-high Saloon, a-loosenin' his gun-belt. He came bustin' through the double doors, an' there was Windy Bill, a-poundin' on the bar an' drinkin' red likker. Everybody in the place was sittin' around the walls, afraid to move. As Jim stepped inside, Windy Bill was started makin' his brag.

"I'm wild an' woolly, an' full o' fleas," he roared. "I never been curried above the knees. I'm the original six-toed badman, an' it's my night to howl. If ary one o' you is man enough to drink with me, step up an' name your poison."

Nobody sittin' around the walls stirred, but Big Jim Turner came a-stridin' up to the bar. "I'll drink with you, Windy Bill," said he, "an' you name it."

"Stranger," said Windy Bill, "maybe you aint heard o' the little custom I

have o' shootin' whosomever I drink with. You don't look like a gunman to me, an' there's no more room for notches on my gun."

Then Big Jim began to get mad, an' he rose up until he stood full eighteen hands high. The blue fire flashed in his eyes. "I may not be a gunman," he said, "but I'll do till one comes along. Set us out a quart apiece o' red likker, bartender, an' don't bother about glasses."

Windy Bill hoisted his bottle an' gulped, but Big Jim took his in two long snorts. "Now, then," said he, "you can sling your shootin'-iron any time you've got a mind to."

With that, Windy Bill's hand went to his holster like a hawk swoopin' down on a sage-hen, but he was no match for Big Jim Turner. "'Cause," Big Jim said when the smoke had cleared away an' they were carryin' Windy Bill out, "I'm a ridin' Gila monster from the Wind River country, an' I was born with a six-gun in each hand."

So that's how Windy Bill died with his boots on, just like the song says:

*Oh, a gunman bad was Windy Bill,
'Twas likker got him down.*

*An' they made him a grave out on Boot Hill
When Big Jim came to town.*

Well sir, the people of Elkhorn just fair worshiped Big Jim after that, because this Windy Bill feller had been a-lettin' holes through some of the town's most upstandin' citizens pretty promiscuous-like. All the pretty gals made eyes at him when he came a-walkin' down the street, an' several cowmen thereabouts offered him partnerships in their ranches. But Jim turned 'em all down. "I wasn't never born to die with my

boots on," he said, "an' I'm never goin' to settle down. 'Cause:

*"I'm bound to follow the longhorn steer,
Wherever he may roam.*

*My only roof is the blue sky clear,
The plains my only home."*

So after two-three days Big Jim rose up one mornin' at the crack o' dawn, cocked his ten-gallon hat on one side of his head, an' hit the trail on his blue roan mare that could make a hundred miles a day an' never turn a hair.

Before long they came to a fork in the trail; one fork led out into the flat, open plains, an' the other went a-twistin' off up toward the timber country, where the snow glistened on the high peaks.

"Well, we got nothin' to do, an' all the time in the world to do it in, Blue," said Big Jim. "Which trail do we take?"

Now the wind from the prairie was a-carryin' the smell of sagebrush an' cattle, that the blue roan mare was used to; but the wind from the high country carried a new smell—the smell of sawdust fresh cut from spruce an' sugar-pine logs. It was kind of an interestin' smell, so the mare turned up the trail that led to the timber country. Before travelin' far, they came to a log-road, with big pine trees on each side of it.

Presently Big Jim an' his mare heard the sound of axes a-ringin' in the timber, an' before they knew it they came out in a little clearin', where a sawmill was a-puffin' an' a-wheezin'. But the sawyer was sittin' in the shade, an' his helpers were standin' around, leanin' on their cant-hooks.

*There was two of
his outlaw steers
a-tossin' the lion
back and forth.*





The log was whirlin' like a buzz-saw, and when Paul stopped it sudden-like, Big Jim slipped and fell.

"Who owns this layout?" asked Big Jim, ridin' up to the sawyer.

"Miss Billie Barlow owns it," the sawyer answered, "an' you'll find her over in the office shanty, cryin' her eyes out because she's goin' to lose the mill her daddy left her when he died."

So Big Jim rode over to the office shanty, an' there was Miss Billie Barlow, with her eyes all red from cryin'. "What's the trouble?" asked Jim.

"We've got to have fifty carloads of lumber ready to go out by tomorrow night, or else I lose the mill," she answered. "An' my timber-men are so slow they can't even keep the sawyer busy."

"Well, we'll get the lumber out, then," said Big Jim, takin' off his chaps an' spurs.

"There's nobody on earth could do it outside of maybe Paul Bunyan," said Miss Billie. "Besides, you're a cow-puncher. What do you know about swingin' an ax?"

Then Big Jim stood up straight, an' his eyes flashed fire. "I don't know who this Paul Bunyan feller is," said he, "but I'm Big Jim Turner from the Lazy K Bar, an' there aint no better man than I am, from the Powder River to the Rio Grande. I may not be a timber-man, but I can sure learn. I never rode a mountain-lion either, but I could do it, 'cause I can ride anything that's got four legs an' wears hair.

"So go git me ten men with grindstones, Miss Billie Barlow, for I'm goin' to need 'em to keep my axes sharp. Call in all your timber-men, an' give each one a team o' horses to skid out my logs with. Give the sawyer an extra helper, too, 'cause you're goin' to see timber fall like it never fell before."

Then Miss Billie Barlow called in all her timber-men, an' gave each one a skid team to snake out Big Jim's logs. When he went into the timber, ten men were a-followin' right behind with grindstones. The first stroke Jim made, he buried an ax-head clear out of sight in the trunk of a big spruce tree, so they brought him two special double-bitted axes that were too heavy for the rest of the lumberjacks.

Before long, the timber was a-crashin' down so fast you'd have thought there was an earthquake, an' the more Big Jim learned about swingin' an ax, the faster it fell. The skidders started bringin' in so many logs to the mill that the sawyer had to have a man to pour water on the saw, so's it wouldn't get red-hot an' burn the lumber. Before evenin', ten carloads of lumber were stacked up in the racks, an' Miss Billie Barlow began to smile a little.

When night came on, Big Jim stopped an' leaned on his ax. "Go get your lanterns from the bunkhouse, boys," said he, "'cause we're goin' to work all night." So the men brought their lanterns, an'

all night long Big Jim felled timber for 'em to skid out to the mill. When the contractor showed up the next afternoon, there were his fifty carloads of lumber, all stacked an' ready to go.

As Big Jim came a-stridin' out of the timber with his two axes on his shoulder, all the men gathered round an' marveled at him. "He must be some kin to Paul Bunyan," one of the lumberjacks said, an' Big Jim heard him.

"Just who might this Bunyan feller be?" he inquired, an' when they had sat down at the cook-house table they told him all about Paul Bunyan an' his great ox, Babe.

They told him that Paul was the bull of the North Woods lumbermen, an' a holy terror. They told him how Paul was the only man livin' who could lift himself by his own bootstraps, an' how he could carry a load so heavy that he sank knee-deep in solid rock at every step. The men said that the great ox, Babe, had once been hooked to the tail of a blizzard, an' had outpulled it. One of the lumberjacks said he had once been in Paul's loggin'-camp, an' had seen the great flapjack skillet that was so large it had to be greased by two men tyin' slabs of bacon to their feet an' skatin' around inside it.

"Well," said Big Jim, finishin' off a hindquarter of barbecue beef, "there's no man in the timber country or anywhere else that can say he's a better man than I am. Now that I've learned how to swing an ax, I aim to start off in the mornin' to find this here Paul Bunyan's loggin'-camp."

WHEN Big Jim rose up next mornin' an' got ready for to pull his freight, there was Miss Billie Barlow a-waitin' for him. "Big Jim Turner," said she, "I don't know how to thank you enough for savin' my mill, but I don't take it kindly that you're leavin'. I like you, Big Jim, an' if you'll stay on, I'll make you boss of all my lumberjacks."

But the blue roan mare was a-stampin' an' a-snortin' because she had caught sight of a trail leadin' through the timber, an' Big Jim himself was a-honin' to be on the move. So he said: "I sure appreciate your offer, Miss Billie Barlow, an' maybe I'll ride through here again some day; but right now I've got to go find out if Paul Bunyan's a better man than I am." With that, he swung his leg across the saddle an' left her standin' there a-wavin' good-by at him.

It was pretty rough goin' as Big Jim an' his mare traveled up through the timber country. The crags seemed to frown down on 'em, an' some of the high passes were full of snow. There was lots of down timber in the trails, an' once they got rimrocked amongst the box cañons. Finally, though, when they hadn't seen a soul for three days, they came to the country of the big spruce trees, an' ran across a timber scout.

"I'm lookin' for Paul Bunyan, bad," said Big Jim. "Can you tell me where his loggin'-camp is?"

"Well," answered the timber scout, "do you see that big bare valley yonder? Yesterday that valley was full o' spruce, but Paul an' his crew cleaned it out this mornin'. You'll find his camp on the far side o' that ridge."

When Big Jim rode across the ridge, there was Paul Bunyan's loggin'-camp, set by the side of a river. The lumberjacks were takin' a half-holiday, an' some of them were a-burlin' logs out in the middle of the stream. The cook-shack of the camp was as big as the hay-barn on an ordinary cow ranch, an' most of the men were sittin' around in front of it when Jim rode up. They were a-watchin' Paul Bunyan, who was entertainin' 'em by jugglin' a couple of boulders the size of a horse's head as easy as you or I would juggle marbles.

The men all gathered around as Big Jim came up, lookin' him over, because they'd never seen a cowpuncher in those parts before. Paul Bunyan stopped jugglin' the rocks an' said: "Howdy, stranger. Get down an' rest, an' tell us your troubles."

"I'm Big Jim Turner, from the Lazy K Bar," Jim said, "an' I can out-ride, out-rope, an' out-shoot any 'puncher from the Powder River to the Rio Grande. But I heard tell that you was a better man than I am, so I came to find out."

"Fair enough," said Paul Bunyan, throwin' the boulders he was holdin' plumb out of sight. "Come on down to the river an' I'll burl logs with you."

"I don't remember," Big Jim said, takin' off his chaps, "that I ever burl'd a log in my life, but I can sure try."

So Big Jim followed Paul Bunyan down to the river-bank, an' when Paul jumped onto one end of a big floatin' log, he saw that he was expected to jump onto the other end. Presently Paul's great calked boots started to whirl the log in the water, an' Jim had to



When Paul climbed aboard, the mare gave one big crow-hop, and Paul landed in a bush.

jump like he was skippin' rope to stay on top of his end. Inside of a minute the log was whirlin' like a buzz-saw, an' when Paul stopped it sudden-like, Big Jim's high-heeled cowpuncher's boots slipped—an' he splashed near all the water out of the river when he fell.

"Well," said he, climbin' out on the bank, "you piled me off the log, all right. But then, you can't ride my blue roan mare without gettin' piled, either."

"You tried burlin' with me," said Paul Bunyan; "so I'll try ridin' with you." An' he walked up to the roan mare. Big Jim whispered in the mare's ear, an' when Paul climbed aboard she gave one big crow-hop. Paul landed in a scrub-pine bush, an' the lumberjacks laughed just as hard at him as they had at Jim's wettin' in the river.

Then Big Jim swung into the saddle an' tickled the mare's flanks, an' she began buckin' like the worst outlaw on the range. But Big Jim rode her straight up an' rolled a cigarette in the air. Never once was there daylight showin' between him an' the saddle.

"We've done nothin'," said Paul when Big Jim was climbin' down from Blue, "exceptin' to show that you can't burl logs an' that I'm no buckaroo. Can you swing an ax?"

"Sure," answered Jim, "if you got one big enough for me."

Paul Bunyan brought out two of his

special axes that it took three men to lift, an' handed one to Big Jim. "We'll swamp out a log-road down the valley," said he, "an' we'll cut timber for an hour. My crew'll count the logs as we down 'em."

The two started cuttin' their way through the timber, an' the big trees fell like wheat before a scythe. Never before in all the North Woods country was there such a crashin' of timber. For miles around the lumberjacks all ran for the high bare ridges, because they figured a twister was a-comin', sure. The chips flew out from under the axes of Paul Bunyan an' Big Jim like snow-flakes in a blizzard. But no sooner would Paul notch a tree an' fell it than Big Jim would do the same, an' when the time was up, they'd swamped a log-road five miles down the valley. When the foreman of Paul's crew came a-stridin' up, he told 'em they'd felled exactly the same amount of timber.

"Looks like we'll have to fight it out hand-to-hand," said Big Jim. He said it kind of sad-like too, because he'd taken a likin' to Paul Bunyan, an' Paul wasn't no-wise hostile toward him.

"I got a better idea," Paul Bunyan said. "I've heard you set some store by your blue roan mare, Big Jim. Now, I've got a great ox, Babe, that I think quite a lot of. Supposin' we were to hook 'em up to pull against one another,

an' decide it that way. If'n my Babe outpulls your Blue, then you'll admit that I'm a better man than you are. If it turns out the other way, then I'll admit that you're the better man."

"Bring out your ox," said Big Jim, an' they all walked back to the loggin'-camp. Paul yoked up his great ox, an' Jim 'lowed he'd never seen so much ox all at one time. Then the lumberjacks brought out the largest log-chain in camp. Its links were so big that a small dog could jump through one without even scratchin' his back.

Big Jim climbed into the saddle on his blue roan mare, an' hooked one end of the chain around the saddle-horn while Paul Bunyan was a-hookin' the great ox to the other end. Then Blue began a-scratchin' gravel, an' the ox Babe pulled so hard he sank his hoofs plumb out of sight in the ground. But neither one was makin' any headway, so Big Jim gave Blue the spurs, an' Paul goaded his ox. The both of 'em gave a big heave, an' the chain snapped right in two in the middle.

"I reckon that settles it," said Big Jim Turner, 'lightin' down an' takin' off his vest for to fight.

"Hold on a minute," said Paul Bunyan. "I'm not afraid o' you or any man livin', an' I'll fight you if you say so, Big Jim. But I kind o' like you, an' it won't do us a bit o' good to tangle, 'cause you're a 'puncher, Jim, an' I'm a lumberman. Cowmen are goin' to tell stories about you for years to come, an' lumberjacks'll do the same about me. No matter if I was to lick you, you'd still be the best cow-puncher from the Powder River to the Rio Grande. An' if you was to lick me, I'd still be the boss bull o' the lumberjacks. If'n you want to go back to the Wind River country peaceable, here's my hand—an' I'll admit that you're the best man I ever met."

Big Jim stood there a-frownin'; but presently he began to grin, an' he reached out an' shook Paul Bunyan's hand in a grip that would have crushed an ordinary man's bones. Then the two of 'em an' all the lumberjacks went up to the cook-house, where the cook was a-makin' flapjack batter in a cement-mixer, an' they all sat down to eat. . . .

So that, folks, is how Big Jim Turner of the Lazy K Bar met Paul Bunyan of the North Woods—an' how they decided that neither was a better man than the other.

REAL EX-

To nearly everyone comes some one experience so unusual or so exciting as to deserve record in print. Each month therefore, we publish the five of the many true stories submitted by your fellow-readers. (For details of this Real Experience story contest, see page 3). The first of these stories this month follows below—Mr. Wright's brilliant description of what it feels like to be in a sandstorm on the Sahara Desert.

The Sand

By EUGENE

WE were a caravan of twenty-two camels and seven men, six of them Arabs. Since leaving Ouar-gla, two hundred and fifty miles south of the Mediterranean, we had struck one sandstorm after another. They had given us a sharp sandpapering, and a blow in the face, and bothered the camels' eyes a good deal, but there had been no danger of being buried alive.

But I was still a novice in the Sahara, and I had yet to cross its southern limits—an area two thousand miles from east to west, and almost a thousand miles deep, known as the Tanzerouft—"the land without water." At the point where we crossed it, it was a chaos of blistering sand and rock, so level that at the end of a day's march you could look back and see the very dunes where you had drunk tea at four o'clock that morning. You could smell your guide's cigarette a half-mile away. You could hear your men jabbering at one another when they were but little black specks on the horizon. And it was so hot during the day that at ten o'clock you ceased thinking. You wrapped five yards of white cloth round your head, closed your eyes, and swayed atop your camel like a sack of wheat until the fourth camel ahead was walking in your shadow. Then you un-

PERIENCES



Storm

WRIGHT

folded the five yards of cloth that covered your head and shoulders and asked yourself how it was possible that civilized man had allowed such a place to exist. It might be simpler to say that the thermometer in my saddlebag registered 140 degrees Fahrenheit and that we had to drink five gallons of water a day apiece to keep alive.

For three hundred miles we traveled merely by following the bones of mummified carcasses of camels, and the graves of men, that extended day after day from one end of the horizon to the other. But when we began to get into the dune region we had to travel by the stars at night and by the guide's sense of direction during the day. The shifting sand had covered the camel carcasses, and as the dunes are constantly changing their shapes there were, of course, no landmarks. It was like traveling across a great muddy sea that had been frozen at the height of a storm and was beginning to melt. Some of the dunes had sharp edges and smoking summits; but most of them were only a hundred feet or so in height with long, smooth sides that blended with another dune. If you stood on top of one you'd look like an ant standing guard on a pebbled-grain football.

We were winding through these sandy labyrinths one day when we came upon the skeletons of six camels, half-buried. The Arabs began to exclaim at the sight and got down to examine them, and then began digging. I asked my guide why they were making such a fuss over these camel carcasses.

"Last year there was a big dune here," he said. "Just like you see all around us. Now it has gone away—and we find a caravan!"

The men had already uncovered the mummified bodies of human beings with shreds of clothing still on them, and were pulling up old-fashioned muskets, brass camel bridles, and all the paraphernalia of a big, well-equipped caravan.

"They say it was a Fezzan caravan," my guide said. "They remember their fathers talking about it."

In short, we had come upon the remains of a caravan that had been caught in a sandstorm and buried from the world until the moment of our arrival. The dry sands had preserved it almost intact. The Arabs reburied the human bodies and after the desert custom poured a little water over the head of each so that they should not thereafter be persecuted by the dead men's cries for water. They marked the graves with camel bones, and then we went our way.

This was the first real evidence that I had seen of what a sandstorm can do, and with six hundred miles of desert yet to cross I began to feel uneasy.

The middle of August came. Murky clouds casting great black patches over the golden sand began to drift over the horizon from the south. From time to time, little gusts of wind caught up the sand in spirals that danced like mad for a mile or two and then disappeared into the air. The sun went down in a haze that made our hands and faces look red.

We slept fitfully during the night. The camels bellowed and tried to rise with their hobbles on. The sand was packed under me as hard as rock, and I felt as if I were sleeping in damp blankets.

All the next morning we marched cautiously, as though at any moment the lead camel might go down bellowing into a quicksand. And at about three o'clock that afternoon a thin black line appeared on the horizon to the south. I thought for a moment that it was a mirage; but it grew higher and higher, as if the world were tilting forward and darkness was rising about us; above was a smoky haze that took the shape of gigan-

tic columns, laboriously blending with one another and towering into the blue heavens. The sands began to lift and leap; small stones bounded past our camel's feet. My clothes were tugging at my body and loose ends of garments and bits of my turban were whipping in the wind ahead like banners.

"Keep them moving! For the love of Allah, don't let them kneel!" The men were shouting all down the line, furiously whipping their camels. Those in the lead had leaped down from their saddles and were pulling at the camel's nose-cords. The camels had lifted their heads and were looking forward alertly. My own camel stopped and began to bellow. I beat him savagely with my heavy whip.

"Hurry! Tie them together!"

The desert was falling deeper and deeper into darkness. To right and left the rising black clouds were eating up the horizon. My garments were tight to my chest and thighs, but billowing and snapping behind. Like some great bird for the first time on earth, the guide lurched precariously in the rising gale, his black sun-cloak blown high about his head, striving to keep the caravan herded and moving as a single unit. There sounded a rustling, a gathering, ominous crescendo from all around.

I hammered frantically against my camel's neck with my foot; I dug my hard heels into his stomach. The great sandy pillars were towering over us, purple, blue and red, monstrous heralds of the hissing tidal wave of sand that was bearing down upon us with the speed of an express-train. Behind, the last gleam of light faded. The camels collapsed, bellying, to their knees as the storm struck.

IT struck too quick for thought. A moment before, I had seen the gray wall a quarter-mile ahead. Then I had been jerked forward—backward; I felt my body strike the earth, and my camel's knees against my chest. Now it seemed that I had been chained to the base of a great falls. All over my body there was a dull, numbing impact. My head was like a sounding-box. I knew only that the wave of sand had struck us; that interminable oceans of sand were being hurled over us. My clothes had left me as if by magic and my turban strained in two coils round my neck.

I dug deeper under the protection of my camel's belly, cupping my face in my hands. The wind was almost solid with sand and its driving lash bit as it struck,

as it scoured its way across the highway of a great desolation.

Against the substance of our bodies it began to pack, and I willed myself to move; but my body was held as in a vise. I said: "I *will* get up and walk—I will take my camel and lead him on into the teeth of the storm!" I struggled, broke out of the sand and made a swoop for my camel's bridle, springing forward; then I found myself on my back. I grabbed at his hair and it came out in my hands; I pulled myself up by the saddle on his back, and drove my knee against his belly; but he would not move, and again the wind blew me down with heavy body-blows against which there was no conflict except in my desire to live. I could not lift my head but to have it rammed against my camel, nor lift my hand but that it was turned and twisted like a hand thrust out the window of an express train. The sand had banked up to the level of the animal's back, in a speedy mound across my prostrate body—leaving cold swirling hollows where the loaded wind danced and sang.

Have you never, as a child, buried ants or beetles with a turn of your hand, merely to watch them emerge? You knelt over the mound of sand with fascinated eyes, waiting for a movement of the grains that announced the creature's struggle for freedom. And once it had gained the light you as quickly buried it again, beneath a higher mound.

And so it was with ourselves. Struggle as we might, the sand was piling up in a broad, low mound, twenty-two camels long, with all the knife-edged curves and smoking summits that I had once gazed upon in admiration.

As one swimming in a muddy torrent sees a log hurtling past his head, I caught a glimpse of my baggage-camel's neck, then his head, high up, and his long beard blown straight back under his chin. Then a blow that scraped the desert like putty-knife unloaded its débris upon us, and my eyes snapped shut.

Some one was pulling my arm; the guide was beside me. "We're going on!" he bawled in my ear. "And for God's sake try to stay with us!"

Then he was gone.

When I turned, squinting through my fingers, I found that I could see the second camel ahead. The wind had momentarily decreased. The camel struggled to its feet and I leaned forward, pulling on the nose-cord of my own mount. I sought to grasp the tail of the

camel ahead, but a sudden blinding torrent of sand intervened and when I again opened my eyes he was out of reach, veering toward the right to keep his body small in the gale.

Here was a big dark bundle. There was another a few steps farther on. Loads of dates—the camels had thrown them with the first blow. I held on to the first, using it to grasp the second, squinting through alternate eyes just long enough to see where I went; leaning forward, almost in an arc; then on all fours. My body was naked and burning. It flamed at the touch of my elbows; it was being eaten by the sand. But we must keep moving, for it was death to lie still.

The storm blew all that night and all of the next day. We knew it was night because of the intense darkness and because the wind slackened its speed by several miles an hour. We knew it was day by the increased power of the wind. We drank by burying our mouths in our water-skins and sucking. We did not eat; we did not sleep. We kept twisting and moving, an inch at a time, several feet an hour. We moved blindly, our camel bridles tied around our waists.

AT midnight of the third day the storm ceased. The great silence was disturbed only by vagrant winds singing among the newly created dunes, and a distant thumping, not unlike the beating of one's heart—the desert "drums." I felt some one shaking my shoulder. Whoever it was, he could not speak; but I knew it was the signal to move on.

I got up on my knees, and then to my feet, trying to coördinate myself, like a puzzle trying to put itself together. Then I got my camel to his feet and managed to climb up his neck into the saddle.

Just what part of our caravan moved on, I did not know. It was too dark to see; my ears were like shells of the storm, and my mouth was raw and wooden. And because camels were constantly dropping out as we marched, I never knew. I knew only that we were winding through an interminable labyrinth of dunes, hopelessly lost, yet seeking blindly for the next well.

Not until the heat of day touched my body was I aware that dawn had come. The atmosphere was filled with dust, still falling. I could see my baggage-camel behind me and an Arab riding the second camel ahead, and that was all. Everything else was a gray mist, a hot, blind-

ing fog. I wrapped up my head against the heat and covered my body with a blanket. Though we wandered where our camels led us, I believed that they would find the well.

Could you have seen their drawn bellies and their slow step you would have turned your head. "God pity the men who ride them!" you would have said.

One by one, throughout the day, they dropped behind us and were swallowed up by the dust. There was a tightening all along the line, the snap of their nose-cords, and then an awkward silence. We started up again with a kind of backward motion, as though the camels had eaten heavily and were loath to move.

And that night, gathered in a silent group and feeling with our hands, we began to salvage among those that remained. There was a clink of brass pans, a hushed shuffling of garments and heavy bodies; then a spurt of flame and a sharp, sudden report that had no echo. Twice again the rifle sounded.

Throughout the night their stomachs hung dripping through cloths into the brass pans, and the liquid was divided among seven men.

And as the world revolved and light came filtering through the darkness I became aware of my six companions rising and descending in unison and laying their foreheads against the sand. A sudden desire to pray with them came over me. But when I willed my lips to move and my tongue to speak I discovered why they too were silent. The muscles tightened in my throat, but no sound came forth—my tongue had filled my mouth.

I have a vague recollection of my camel struggling to its feet, falling, and rising again to join the others. I remember myself clinging to the cross of my saddle like a man swaying on the end of a pole; but I no longer saw, I no longer heard. When the candle burns so low, what can one say except that the flame survived?

Until the moment when I opened my eyes to see the desert bright as day and the moon wonderful above, I know only that I lived. I lay motionless on my back. I could smell the camels; I could hear them chewing their cud. Turning my head I saw nine of them,—all that remained of twenty-two,—with their bellies swollen with water. Between them and myself lay the six Arabs, wrapped in their burnouses, sleeping.

I got to my feet and drew the cool night air deeply into my lungs. . . . Yes, we had conquered.

*Two inland
boys go sailing
in flood-time,
and run into a
real adventure.*

By FRANK
EVARTS
WELLS



Castaways in Kansas

AS a boy I always wanted to own and sail a catboat—a queer ambition for one born and raised on the plains of north-central Kansas. But I was not alone in it. My chum Ross Collins, who lived on an adjoining farm, was equally “nuts” over a sailboat.

The only water we had was in the Solomon River—the south fork, and many a September I had jumped across that. But about every seventh or eighth year the old Solomon goes on a tear and gets as much as half a mile wide.

The spring I was twenty and my chum twenty-one, we laid the keel for our sailboat. A heavy general rain set in before we had the thing done, and by the time we had calked the last seam, the Solomon was the highest in forty years.

One thing could be said for that boat—it was sturdy. It measured eighteen feet from stem to stern, and had a maximum width of four feet. The sides were of three-fourths-inch cypress flooring, neatly rounded and brought in to a width of two feet at the stern. The center-board was made of a six-inch board set on edge, pointed at the prow and full width at the middle. The twenty-foot mast was made of jointed iron pipe, two inches in diameter at the base and tapering to half an inch at the top. The boom was fifteen feet long, and the triangular sail of twelve-ounce canvas.

We launched that boat over the Ross cornfield, half a mile from the normal bed of the river. To our delight the boat behaved admirably under a strong southeast wind and we quickly learned to tack. Our success went to our heads,

and we began to take chances. The river was still rising, and we sailed down near the one-span bridge just in time to see the floor rise and the whole top structure wash off downstream.

That bridge stood in a sort of neck of the river's valley. Above that neck the water, though moving rapidly, was comparatively smooth and quiet. But just below it formed a rapids that churned and thrashed, raising white-topped breakers four and five feet high.

We boys realized those rapids would be no place for our boat, but we didn't stop to consider that the slightest mishap—say a sunken log crashing our center board or breaking the rudder—might throw us into them. We had taken one precaution, however: We wore only caps and bathing-suits.

We were in midstream when our luck deserted us. The wind died suddenly, and the boat dropped downstream at amazing speed. We jumped for the oars lying in the bottom, but before we could get them into play, the boat hit a big cottonwood. The mast caught in the branches and promptly capsized the boat. We took to the tree. Thinking to save the boat, I seized the log-chain we had firmly bolted to the prow, and quickly hooked it about a big limb. The boat went completely under water, forced down under the branches by the current, and the chain drew taut.

Over on the bank, we could make out figures of men climbing trees to see what had become of us. We waved our caps to let them know we hadn't drowned.

Night came on quickly, and with it a

cold drizzle which seemed to drive its chill clean through our half-naked bodies. We were too wretched to talk, so hung on mutely with the dismal gurgle and roar of the water in our ears. We wedged ourselves into the crotches of limbs, and fought off sleep, not daring to lose consciousness for fear we might fall into the river.

Over on the bank they kept a fire going all night, and it helped just to know that they were keeping watch. It seemed to us that the night would never end.

We had no hope of rescue, for every boat along that river had been caught by the flood, and was deep under water.

"Just one thing we can do," Ross summed up the situation miserably; "wait till the river goes down."

I owe my life to Ross. He conceived the idea of diving down to the boat, and getting a rope out of the forward locker. I protested that it was too risky, but he went down the chain hand over hand, and came back with the rope we had intended to use for a trot-line. We lashed ourselves to the tree, and thus were able to rest our arms, and catch fitful bits of sleep, unmindful of the limbs and bark cutting into our flesh.

Woefully tired and hungry, shivering from the cold and aching in every joint, we pulled through that second night.

About noon the third day we saw those on the bank launch a bright new boat. Our hopes mounted. We knew they must have built that boat especially to rescue us, for with the railroad bridge out and the roads closed, they couldn't have shipped it in. We shouted with joy.

They pushed the boat out into the stream with two men at the oars. At first, while near the bank, the boat made a little headway, but once they got out into the current, their efforts were vain. Though they turned the prow straight upstream and rowed frantically, the boat still gave ground.

One of the oarsmen stood up, cupped his hands to his mouth, and shouted: "Can't make it. Hang on two days more. River's dropping at Hill City."

He fell to the oars again, and the two barely managed to reach the bank without being drawn into those rapids below.

"That settles it," wailed Ross. "Nothing to do but stick it out two days more, and me hungry enough to eat raw turtle."

Just before nightfall I felt the tree give a sudden lurch, and lean a little downstream.

"What's that?" I cried.

"Our tree's being undermined," Ross said hollowly.

We both looked downstream at those rapids chopping and foaming, well aware that in our weakened condition we would not stand a ghost of a show in them.

"What makes our tree wash out while those others around here don't seem affected?" I asked at length.

"The boat," Ross answered.

I saw it, then. The boat was hanging at an angle under those branches, and forcing the current downward.

It occurred to me that we'd better let the boat go, and I seized the chain, but found it drawn so tight I could not loosen the hook.

That night was sheer torture. We were weakened by hunger, exposure and lack of sleep, and yet we didn't dare lash ourselves to the tree for fear it might submerge and take us under. There was still a bare chance that in case we were forced out of that tree we might be able to swim to another.

The tree sank lower and lower, and we climbed higher, till at last we were forced to cling to several of the small branches at once to support our weight.

IN the dead of the night, I felt the tree give a lurch as the roots gave way.

"Our tree's gone. We'll have to swim for it!" I shouted to Ross.

"Don't let go yet," he shouted back. "Hang on as long as there is a limb above water."

As the tree lurched downstream, the top branches caught in a clump of ash trees and sank, while we scrambled for new holds in the lower branches that were now forced upward. The tree took a roll, then lodged precariously.

A strong wind sprang up, cutting us to the bone, and after that things were a good deal of a blur to me until at last morning came, and I found myself half-submerged in the cold water, but still clinging to a sturdy limb. I was so numb that I had to look, to tell how far the water came up on my body. Only my head and shoulders were out.

I heard Ross, higher up in the branches, singing senseless phrases, until his voice broke in a fit of coughing. It dawned on me that he had developed a fever and was delirious.

By this time the sun was up, and its warm rays came none too soon. Realizing that I must get up out of the water, I tried to let loose with my right hand, but it refused to obey my will.

It was only after I had drawn my head up to that hand and had blown hot breath on it and nudged and worked the fingers with my chin, that I was able to get it loose. The left was no better, and yet those very cramps may have been what kept me hanging to that tree while I was but half conscious.

Suddenly my eyes caught an object in our tree—our boat, lifted half out of water by supporting branches, lying on its side. The roll of the tree as it settled had lifted the boat to that position. The mast was still in place, and the sail whole, except for a few tears.

"The boat, Ross!" I whooped hoarsely. But he stared at me with vacant eyes.

I tried to right the boat, only to find that I couldn't budge it. I called to Ross to lend a hand, but he only laughed at me, and shouted that he was a birdie up in the tree-top.

By taking out the heavy mast and sail, which I tied securely up among the branches, I was at last able to get the boat right side up. I bailed it out with cupped hands and cap.

It cost me an agony of effort to get that mast in place again. But at last it was up, and the sail with it. I got Ross into the boat after a hard tussle, and raised the sail.

The wind caught the canvas, and once more the *Mary Ann* cut her way steadily upstream, thanks to that wind that had been such a torture to us during the night. I turned the prow a little, and tried to shout as I saw land gradually drawing nearer. It came to me then that my throat was sore, and my head strangely dizzy. Ross lay in the bottom of the boat, shivering with a chill.

"I've got to make that bank," I kept repeating as I struggled with the boom rope and the tiller, almost more than I could handle in my weakened condition. I tried to shake off a blackness that was settling about me, but couldn't. My last recollection is of seeing my father's face.

It was days later before I learned that my father had come out in the new boat, barely in time to take over the helm.

The *Mary Ann* never sailed again. It was weeks before Ross and I shook off the fever and recovered enough from our exposure to get out once more, and by that time the Solomon had retreated to its low-water banks. I moved away the following year, and Ross turned to the airplane. But we'll never forget those three days in a tree above the hungry flood-waters of the Solomon.

First Over the Lines

*A war-time flight which,
for good reasons, is not
in official records.*

By Lieut.-Colonel
W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR.

EARLY in April, 1918, I made the first flight "over the lines" to be made by an officer of the United States Army in a fully equipped plane of the A.E.F. It was not an "official" flight, and I might have been court-martialed had my commanding officer known about it. It happened this way:

On March 31, 1918, I delivered to the First Aero Squadron, stationed at Amanty, France, its first fully equipped Spad biplace plane. April first was spent in tuning up the motor and painting the insignia of the First Aero Squadron on the upper and lower wings, and carefully tacking two silk American flags on either side of the fuselage.

After noon mess, April second, Captain Griffin, Squadron photographic officer, asked me whether I would fly him for a test of the new aerial camera just received that morning by the squadron.

The ground wind on our take-off was from the German lines, blowing at about sixteen miles an hour. At twenty-five hundred meters we reached our ceiling. With my compass course set for Commercy, I went up into the thick cloud formation a few hundred feet to practice blind flying. In a few minutes I ducked under the clouds, and seeing a little French village below us yelled back to Griffin, who had the map, to ask what village we were over.

"That's Vauculeurs," he shouted in my ear. "That's Commercy ahead. Keep straight."

I pulled up into the clouds and flew for a few minutes. When I came down again there was a large village under us and Griffin yelled to me:

"That's Commercy. Make a big circle and come in from the northwest for our strip. Keep her steady and straight."



I did so; Griffin nodded his head and disappeared into his cockpit, sighting the camera through a small hole cut in the floor and working the charging handle.

Suddenly I noticed black puffs of smoke breaking in the air, above me.

It dawned on me I was seeing "Archie" for the first time. I did not know the German anti-aircraft shells burst black, high-explosive, while the Allied bursts were white like fluffs of cotton—shrapnel. The thought flashed through my head that the French "Archie" battery below, seeing our insignia painted on the lower wings, were throwing a few shells our way to see what I would do.

"If I try to dodge them," I thought to myself, "they'll have the laugh on me. I'll just glide down and wave to them."

Motor throttled, I began to spiral down. The altimeter showed two hundred fifty meters. The black bursts stopped suddenly. Now came snowflakes—but they were coming *up* from the ground!

"What in the world are those things?" I asked myself.

Zip! Zip! Zip! Zip! The snowflakes were ripping through my left wing.

I cocked up the left wing and side-slipped. At two hundred meters I rudered into the slip and leveled off. Then I felt a wallop on my right shoulder. Griffin was grabbing my flying-suit. He had hit me with the flat of his hand.

"For God's sake! Where've you flown to? We're way in Hunland! Don't you see the trenches?"

Trenches? Yes, there were lots of them around the town; but I'd seen trenches before—practice-trenches, all around Gondrecourt, the advance training-center of the A.E.F.

"Hell, no!" I shouted back. "We're right over the place you told me was

Commercy. The 'Frogs' see our insignia and are trying to make me run. I'm going to make 'em duck!"

"You damn' fool! Can't you see their uniforms? Look! The whole damn' town is shooting at us. Pull out and fly south! We're inside the lines!"

Scared? I pulled back on the stick, zoomed out of the dive, almost taking the wings off, turned south and hedge-hopped for almost an hour. Then I saw a railroad. I recognized the cog track up the side of the mountain at Chaumont. I turned north and climbed the Spad, up and up—five thousand meters. I headed southwest for Amanty. I cut my switches, off and on, to make the motor sound as though it was missing. When sure of my gliding distance I cut the switches and came in for a deadstick landing, out on the north edge of the 'drome, as far from the hangars and our Major Royce as possible.

My mechanic came rushing across the field in a side-car. He started to swing the prop, asking what seemed to be the matter with the motor.

"Nothing the matter with the motor," I said. "See those wings and elevators? Machine-gun bullet-holes! Got lost and had the hell shot out of us. We'll get a court-martial and be sent back to Issoudun if the Major hears about it. Pretend to fix the motor, out here, until dark. Then get the bus in, and patch up the holes so nobody can tell what they are. Let's have the side-car."

Sergeant Van Sickle's eyes almost popped out of his head. He was walking around the plane, counting bullet-holes.

"Yes, sir! There's a hundred forty-one holes in the wings and fuselage, but none in the motor."

Neither Griffin or I had received a scratch. He told me a bullet had come up between his hands through the floor, an inch or so from his face. It was then he first realized something was wrong.

"Drinks are on you, Captain," I said to Griffin, after studying the map. "I wasn't lost. You thought Commercy was Vauculeurs and it was old St. Mihiel itself. There must have been a hell of a wind from the southeast, upstairs."

Major Royce didn't know about it, until after the French general pinned the Croix de Guerre on his chest, for flying the first fully equipped plane of the American Expeditionary Forces across the German lines. Then I told him; I had command of the Ninetieth Squadron and he couldn't court-martial me!

*A Forest Ranger fights a fire
and a gang of communists too.*

By HARRY T.
OLMSTED



The Fight in the Forest

THAT summer of 1910 was a fire-scoured nightmare to thousands of Northwestern forest men, toiling along a far-flung front. Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana timber was ablaze. Smoke rolled in sun-blanketing clouds to the Great Lakes. We fought the holocaust without trails, transportation or modern coördination. Heat and smoke! Hunger and thirst! Fatigue!

On memory's screen, characters and incidents stand forth. Texas Slim, that hulking, he-man ranger who wore the only gun in the Bitter Root Forest organization. Imagine a bull moose ranger wearing a measly .32 caliber mail-order pistol! Taking our joshing like a soldier, and counting it small cost for the fun of popping off squirrels and chipmunks as he rode. Little did I think that one day I'd look back with thanks to Slim and his toy that we derisively called "Meat in the Pot."

I was in charge of a back-trail crew on the stubborn Miller Creek fire. We were patrolling a long firebreak leading up to the main divide. It was hot on one side and the wind was tricky, the range dry as tinder. Miles ahead, the main crew raced to pinch in the blaze and their margin was slim. It was a toss-up whether they'd get around it or just close enough to see it sweep past them and into magnificent stands of yellow pine. If we could hold the back trail, there was a chance.

Labor was a terrible problem. All we were getting was riff-raff—the backwash from the seasonal wheat harvest in the Dakotas. Reds flaunting their Wobbly cards. Diseased physically, mentally, morally. Touchy and sullen.

In my crew was one called Orby, so named from his boast, "I doused me own orb an' took de steel woiks for a grand." A burly, heavy-muscled steel-worker from Pittsburgh, he was made ugly by a gnawing hate of anything governmental and the never-ending torture of that eye he had destroyed to collect the compensation. Orby was a trouble-breeder and he had my crew in his pocket.

One day the fire jumped the back trail. Not a man was on his beat. I found them in a shady glen, spellbound by Orby's eloquence. When they saw me, they leaped up and flew to furious shoveling. Then realizing their absurdity, they rested, daring me with their eyes. What I told them wasn't Marxian or pretty. But it was plain, unvarnished United States and they savvied it. I stung them down-trail to the break and we caught it up.

That night they were sullen, muttering. About nine o'clock a gang of replacements went through, headed for the front. From some one of these, Orby got a bottle of whisky, though I had no way of knowing that. What I did know was that on the morrow they would all quit. They "had 'er made."

At ten o'clock I was in bed. But the men hugged the fire almost all night. Next morning they disregarded the breakfast call and slept late. I had the time figured and the sheets made out when Orby came to my tent.

"We're t'rough, cull," he growled. "Finished, see? We got 'er made!"

"You're not smart, Orby," I told him. "If you quit today, you'll walk clear to Missoula. Work today and I'll arrange for a ride from Cañon Camp tomorrow."

The big steel-worker snorted. "I'll arrange fer the ride, bo. Don't stall me. Make out de time!"

"It's all made out, Orby. What about it?"

"Wot about it? Huh! Slip 'er, cull. Slip 'er. Put 'er in me mitt."

"Positively not!" I refused. "It's against the rules. Uncle Sam says the time shall be sent down by the first ranger riding through."

"Oh, he does, does he?" Orby laughed in my face, and it wasn't until then that I knew there was liquor in camp. "Now don't you horse us muggs, kid, an' nothin'll happen to yuh. Slip me, cull; kick through."

"You're wasting my time, Orby. Nothin' doing."

He drew out a cheap, battered watch.

"If you t'ink us muggs is goin' down de hill an' waitin' fer yer ranger tuh bring in de time, ye're crazy. We're takin' it with us. Yuh gits fifteen minutes, bo, tuh change yer mind. Then—"

He balled his huge knuckles and blew on them. Then he eased out of the tent, grinning fiendishly. Something in his manner let me know that it wasn't all bluff. I looked through the tent-flaps. They'd fanned out—were sitting in a rude circle around my tent. Every man had a club, caught from the woodpile. Drunk and depraved as they were, would they dare assault and perhaps kill a government man? It occurred to me that a one-man beating with fists might be preferable to twenty men working on me with clubs. I stepped outside and they eyed me like wolves.

"Orby," I said, affecting a jauntiness I didn't feel, "if you want these time-sheets, you'll knock me out and take them away from me. That'll earn you ten years in Leavenworth. If you like the prospect, jerk off your coat!"

His ugly laugh stung me. "Smart, aint yuh, bo. Well, I aint so dumb! You're fixin' it now so's us muggs kin git our time when we hit Missoula."

"How?" I asked.

"You aint askin' me, cull; you're tellin' me. An' in the next twelve minutes. If yuh don't we're sluggin' yuh an' puttin' the fire acrost the trail. They'll find yer carcass roasted to a turn an' us muggs doin' all we can. The sheets'll be here in yer tent. Think it over, cull."

IT was a pretty picture he painted, and not wholly a fanciful one. Any man who can put out his own eye to collect

insurance certainly wouldn't shy at anything from mayhem to manslaughter. My stomach turned over. Scared? You bet I was! One unarmed man against twenty drunken, authority-hating Wobblies. A lightweight against middles and heavies—with not even a rock or a club to aid me! How could I make a decent scrap of it?

As the dread moment neared, Orby pocketed his watch, peeled off his coat, rolled his flannel shirt over hairy, bulging forearms.

"Yer time's up, cull," he rasped. "You slip us muggs de time or—"

He paused and through the fog of reactions came one clear beam: they must not get the time-sheets. I drew them from my inner pocket, and I laughed aloud as I tore them across and down and tossed away the fragments.

"There's your time, you yellow dog," I barked at Orby. "Help yourself."

"Why, you lousy, four-flushin' son!" he bellowed. "Fer that, I'll beat yer fat head off an' tear yuh to pieces. Close in, muggs, so's he can't run. Give him a woikin'-over!"

Stooped, arms akimbo, a knotted club in his hand, he came forward, his one eye glittering like that of some awful ogre. Snarling, cursing. Behind me sounded the tread of his fellows as they edged in. A terrible fear was upon me, but also a rage that transcended it. I don't recall shedding my coat but I did, and started toward the big Wobbly.

WE had covered perhaps half of the intervening distance when Orby suddenly stopped, straightened, froze. I too halted; a tense silence gripped the camp as every man in that drum-tight circle listened. Now the sound came again. The click of shod hoof on stone! A rider—it didn't matter who it was, just so it was a friendly human being and not a Wobbly. I wanted to cry out to whoever it was, wanted to urge him on. But my voice stuck in my dry throat. And then—a shot rang out!

What a howl my lungs gave up. I knew the dinky pop of Slim's measly .32. Down the trail a way, Slim was popping at a squirrel. Shot after shot. And the Wobblies were on the run!

"Slim!" I bellowed. "Feed 'em lead and hell, you gun-fightin' buckaroo!"

Slim's answering shout came back and then the pound of hoofs. I tore after Orby, now running in the shortest line for the brush. I caught him at the edge

of timber and whirled him around. We belted each other with roundhouse swings and both went down. The next I knew Orby and his Wobblies were gone, I was reeling tipsily and Slim was walking toward me with a pained expression and an empty whisky-bottle.

"Feller," he said in his soft Texas drawl, "this is shore bad. You been drinkin' red likker! Yo're drunk!"

It was so funny that I laughed. "I'm drunk, Slim," I managed at last, "but not on booze. What in the world brought you up here a day early?"

"I fetched up a new cook, feller. He's back yonder a piece. But it don't look like you'll be needin' him. This is shore bad, boy."

He pointed up the ridge where fresh smoke boiled into the sky. To our ears came the roar of leaping flames. And not until then did I realize that the back trail was not patrolled. The fire was across the break!

"Good Lord, Slim!" I swore. "Grab a shovel an' let's go."

All that day Slim and I and a badly rattled camp cook broke our hearts to check that break. And during brief periods of rest, I told Slim the story.

"And you don't know how glad I was to see you, Slim, and that goes for that little old iron—Meat-in-the-Pot," I said. "Nor how close I came to kissing you!"

"It's a good thing you didn't," growled Slim, looking scared. "Cause if you had, I'd of dabbed a rope on you an' taken you down tuh headquarters fer bein' loco drunk."

That night the main crew came down to relieve us. Weary, beaten, discouraged, we dragged back to camp and fell into our blankets, too tired to eat. And sometime after midnight the tent caved in on us—caved in from an overload of fine, dry snow. The Great Hand had taken a hand to save the forests. The fall was heavy and the temperature dropped. By daylight all the fires were licked, the menace gone.

The Wobblies? In their panic, they scattered like sheep. Untrained to the wilds, they were soon hopelessly lost. The snow caught them. The first to trickle into the Missoula offices were sobbing wrecks. Some never showed up and Orby was one of these. Whether he perished in some snow-clogged cañon or whether he feared to face the music will never be known. But in either event, he paid dearly for the fifteen minutes of hell he dealt me that year of the big fire.

A Battle of Giants

A professional wild-animal collector witnesses a savage fight between two gorillas.

By DON F. TAYLOR

LIKE a purple mantle of soft fur, night closed over Lake Kivu, deep in the Belgian Congo. In the glowing dimness one might have seen the faint glimmer of a light: this was our temporary camp, pitched in a clearing, and surrounded by a bamboo fence as a protection against marauding leopards.

Our safari had arrived from Kabale, the last outpost on the Uganda border in British East Africa. We were bound for Lulunga, the gorilla country of the Upper Congo, to obtain a live young specimen for the Hagenbeck Zoo in Hamburg.

The traveling from Kabale to Lake Kivu was very difficult. Frank Bogué—the veteran French trapper with whom I was associated—and I, as well as the porters, were completely exhausted from the long trek in the tropical sun.

Bogué said to me: "Tomorrow we will proceed to Kissenji. I have been told that gorillas are numerous around the slopes of Mt. Mikenó, and if such is the case, we will establish headquarters at Lulunga; it is only three days' march northward from Kissenji."

At this time there were circulating many conflicting reports about the ferocity of gorillas. Weather-beaten and grizzled old hunters liked to startle their friends with hair-raising tales of how infuriated old bulls charged them on sight and without provocation. They told how their great arms could tear a man limb from limb as if he were a grasshopper. However, naturalists such as Carl Akeley contradicted these wild reports.

NEXT morning, accompanied by Mboni, his Swahili gunbearer, Bogué set out for Kissenji, some two miles north of our encampment, leaving me to follow later with the rest of the safari. Hastily breaking camp, I divided the luggage into



sixty-pound loads, distributing them among the thirty porters, and followed the trail taken by my chief.

Several days later we arrived at Lu-lenga, without serious mishap.

Early the next morning, accompanied by local guides, we ascended the hills toward the bamboos. The climb up the steep slopes of Mikeno was very trying. The ground was muddy and slippery, and much of the trail had to be cut through by the guides.

Panting and perspiring, we eventually arrived at a clearing, and here in the soft mud we saw the first signs of gorillas. The natives had informed us that this tribe of the big anthropoids had on frequent occasions laid waste their banana-patches and vegetable gardens, and from the expressions on their faces, they certainly bore no love for the big apes.

Continuing stealthily and sometimes crawling on all fours, we came to a small glade and here we saw a gorilla's nest at the foot of a huge tree. The nest consisted of dead leaves which the animal had gathered in a mound. There were no sounds of the animals about, though the nest appeared to have been recently occupied.

Getting our tents together, we pitched them on the southern slope of the mountains, making this our base, so that we could be nearer our field of operations. With guides supplied from the near-by White Friars' Mission, we again headed up the slippery slopes, and there once more found signs of the huge beasts. The trail led through a small banana grove, and from the condition of the trees we knew they had been disturbed by gorillas that morning.

This trail led through the bamboos and out into a clearing. And here we just caught a glimpse of a large shaggy back disappearing into the thick underbrush.

Creeping cautiously, one of the guides grasped me by the arm and pointed at a monstrous hairy shape, scarcely discernible in the dark underbrush. We halted in our tracks, watching and listening breathlessly, and then we saw branches parted, and a huge object moved in our direction. Suddenly the beast stopped, and I stood in readiness with my rifle poised for protection in case he should decide to charge us. But he must have discovered our presence, because he turned and disappeared into the thicket.

We had discussed the possibility of trapping a full-grown gorilla or at least a half-grown one, but we decided that it would only be a waste of time. Numerous previous experiments had proven that a full-grown gorilla would not survive captivity. He immediately goes on a hunger-strike and dies in a short time, undoubtedly from a complex of emotions he is incapable of overcoming. But we decided to somehow or other capture a young gorilla. And to do this we knew that we would either have to shoot the mother and perhaps the father gorilla, or get them in a trap and take the baby away from them. At that time shooting gorillas was permitted in the Belgian Congo, and the natives frequently killed them with poisoned arrows when the animals were ravaging their farms. But in spite of their savage appearance, there was something so human in their actions that neither Bogue nor I had the heart to shoot one.

As we now approached the clearing, we saw a big female come out of an opening in the bamboos, followed by a very young male. And before we were aware of it, we were witnessing a domestic scene that would do credit to some of our ape comedies of today.

The mother and son were followed by the old man. The old male approached his spouse and affectionately put his arms around her and grunted a few queer sounds, as if to say, "Dearie, I still love you just as much as the day we were married."

BUT as is the case with happily married human couples, often danger is lurking in the background, some villain ready to steal a loving wife from a devoted husband. And while this touching love scene was being enacted, the still-

ness of the forest was broken by a deep rumble—that resembled low thunder.

Out of the dark trail into the clearing there stepped another great male gorilla. He must have stood fully five feet in height, and with a chest as large as a barrel. With bared fangs, and drumming his chest with his fists, he sidled toward the loving and surprised couple.

The devoted husband was a brave man and not to be frightened by a mere bluffing pose of the villain. Baring his great canines and also drumming his chest, he advanced to the center of the open space ready to do battle for his family.

HERE, in the heart of the jungle, we were about to witness a fight such as few men are privileged to behold, and such as would come but once in the life of a constant hunter. I have cursed myself a thousand times since that I had not carried a camera with me, for had I such an apparatus at that time, I could have recorded a picture that would be a headliner for years to come.

Much as two monster wrestlers, these male gorillas approached one another, and began grappling with their snake-like arms. Each seemed to know the power of his grip, and sought to grasp his opponent in some vulnerable spot. Then they engaged each in a bearlike clinch, burying their sharp fangs into each others' throats and shoulders, and jerking with great surges until they drew blood. As each tore loose, he would shuffle backward a few steps, only to rush forward again with renewed fury. The impact of their heavy bodies almost shook the ground, and their vicious grunts and roars were blood-curdling as they thrashed about that open arena.

And while this bloody encounter for supremacy was going on, Mrs. Gorilla was nonchalantly nibbling at a juicy bamboo shoot close by! She seemed completely to ignore this fierce struggle between her mate and his enemy, who was fighting for mastery and for her. Perhaps during her lifetime she had witnessed many similar battles for her coveted self, and had become indifferent to the fact that she must belong to the victor. Perhaps one mate was as good as another to her.

With thumping hearts and bated breath we watched the scene, hardly believing the evidence of our eyes, and wondering what the outcome of this battle for supremacy would be. In but a short time the two combatants were covered

with blood. The usurper was getting the worst of it. Flesh hung in strips from his mangled shoulders. He was panting for breath, and for a moment it looked as though he would give up the fight and shuffle away. Then he hesitated a few seconds, and rushed in again with renewed fury. The other brute met him in the center of the glade and they halted, glaring hate and murder at each other. Then with mingled roars they were at each other's throats again, grappling now for the death-hold, and snapping with their sharp fangs for some vulnerable and vital spot—a thrilling yet sickening sight to behold. Looking so much like human beings, yet fighting with the fury and viciousness of enraged tigers, the monsters continued their struggle—it was a combat that held us breathless.

At last we could see that the villain was weakening. He had lost too much from his bleeding wounds. The massive hands of his adversary held him by the shoulders in a death-grip; biting him viciously about the head, he now forced his weakened opponent to his knees. And when at last he released his hold, the intruder slumped and rolled flat on his back at the feet of his conqueror.

Seeing that the victory was his, the husband now gave another roar and drummed resoundingly upon his bloody chest, and without as much as one backward look at his fallen adversary, who made no attempt to get up, he turned and shuffled over to his mate. She nuzzled him and stroked him, and grunted, perhaps in gorilla language congratulating him upon his powers. And after a few minutes the pair waddled off into the thick underbrush followed by their half-grown offspring.

THE conquered male lay motionless for some time. We had lost patience and were preparing to leave, when we saw his body move, and then he slowly raised his head to see if his enemy had gone. His bloodshot eyes rolled from side to side, scanning the clearing as he slowly rose to his knees and feet. Then he emitted a challenging roar to his departed adversary, and slowly ambled off into the jungle in the opposite direction.

I have often wondered if there was not a lesson in that battle, a demonstration of forbearance that we humans might well emulate. . . .

Did we succeed in bringing back a live gorilla? Yes—eventually. But that is really another story.

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